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ABSTRACT

Sharp limitations on measuring the impact of Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) can be largely overcome by developing an improved system and techniques for planning projects and their likely effects. The distinguishing characteristics of VISTA for measurement purposes are: a large number of volunteer program activities and sponsors, hence great diversity of outcomes; imprecise goals; and a VISTA presence that reinforces program activities but also has independent consequences. Maximum feasibility of measuring VISTA impact (and maximum benefit to program effectiveness from doing so) depend upon viewing measurement as part of a process that includes: analyzing communities to identify key points for VISTA impact; planning projects designed to achieve specific attitude and behavioral change; training volunteers to work toward these objectives; and measuring and evaluating effectiveness according to designated behavioral indicators related to the specified goals. A specific project embodying these elements is described and recommended in the report. (There is a mistake in numbering pages in document but nothing is missing.) (EB)

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MEASURING THE IMPACT OF

VISTA

ON POVERTY COMMUNITIES

A Study of Feasibility

by

THE AMERICAN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CORPORATION
1725 Eye Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

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January, 1969

The American Technical
  Assistance Corporation
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SUMMARY

Measuring the current impact of VISTA on poverty communities is feasible but sharply limited. These limitations can be largely overcome by developing an improved system and techniques for planning projects and their likely effects. Available literature on social measurement offers few useful precedents for measurement with current or improved programming practices.

VISTA is not a social program that uses a well-defined approach to achieve designated measurable behavioral change goals. Its distinguishing characteristics for measurement purposes are:

1. A large number of volunteer program activities and sponsors that yields a great diversity of program outcomes;

2. General and imprecise goals often interpreted differently by volunteers, sponsor agencies, and participating populations; and

3. A process or VISTA presence, based on volunteers living and working directly with poor people, that reinforces program activities but also has independent consequences.

VISTA impact includes the results of program activities and the effects, often less tangible, of VISTA presence. Program activities produce direct outcomes that are currently recorded in VISTA Activities Surveys, and additional results, not presently measured, that are more remote in time or causal connection. A range of measures can be described for each activity category and included in Activities Surveys, to quantify the more direct and tangible out-

puts of VISTA work. Present programming practices limit application of these measures to review of the volunteer constituency, the group identified by the volunteer as having been served by or involved with him. The diversity and magnitudes of other forces operating on poverty communities make it statistically inappropriate to isolate VISTA impact in any other way.

The impact that results from presence and the generalized effects of program activities is intangible and more difficult to attribute and to measure. Although a wide range of individual assistance and community organization outcomes are included, results are best expressed, both conceptually and operationally, as changes in attitudes. Tabulation at this level of generality encompasses diverse and otherwise non-comparable results. No single attitude can be identified as the principal target or beneficiary of VISTA efforts, but the program influences the entire collection of attitudes understood as the culture of poverty.

Although the behavioral manifestations of attitude change vary with the approach of the volunteers and the environment and personal characteristics of their constituencies, the use of behavioral indicators is more promising than tests or interviews for measuring attitude change. Attitude surveys and tests are of limited value because of:

1. Cultural and conceptual limitations of design,
2. Reactive effects with interviewers,

3. Invasion of target group privacy and interference with volunteer work relationships,

4. Ambiguous relationships between variables measured and respondent behavior.

Indicators based on existence of specific types of behavior permit measurement of VISTA impact on attitudes by tabulation of positive responses. Duration or permanence of impact is tested by repeating measurements periodically. By limiting concern to direction rather than magnitude of behavioral change, simultaneous collection of pre-VISTA and later information is facilitated. Indicators are concerned primarily with initiatives taken by persons involved with VISTA and not with the outcome of those initiatives. Behavior can be reported by volunteers without formal interviews among target populations and can sometimes be confirmed by reference to available public data. Since neither behavioral nor attitude change goals are specified in advance by VISTA or most sponsors, the choice of behavioral indicators must currently depend heavily on volunteer perceptions of appropriateness.

The scientific validity of VISTA impact measurement efforts can be increased by:

1. Historical analysis to establish previously undisturbed behavior patterns,

2. Careful collection of baseline data among groups served by VISTA, for comparison with later findings,

3. Identifying and compensating for effects of overlapping causes of change, and

4. Comparing changes among those working with VISTA to changes in their neighborhoods or immediately surrounding communities.

The development of control groups for comparison with VISTA constituencies or communities is difficult, costly and impractical.

Practical approaches to measurement are limited by:

1. Volunteers' unsympathetic attitudes to measurement and, less frequently, to OEO,

2. Difficulties of assuring reliable target group responses,

3. Unavailable or inaccurate public data,

4. The varied reactions to VISTA among people who are not poor, and

5. The small size of VISTA efforts in relation to other forces at work in poverty communities.

Nevertheless, limited but useful measurements of the impact of current projects can be undertaken, using Activities Surveys, Evaluations, and End-of-Service Questionnaires, as guides to the desirability of further inquiry. Measurement should be based on volunteer responses about changes in behavioral indicators chosen after consultation with them, confirmed by selected target group interviews and review of public data.

Maximum feasibility of measuring VISTA impact, and maximum benefit to program effectiveness from doing so, depend upon viewing measurement as part of a process or system that includes:

1. Analyzing communities to identify key points for VISTA impact,

2. Planning projects designed to achieve specific attitude and behavioral change goals related to these points of impact,

3. Training and administering volunteer groups to work toward these objectives, and

4. Measuring and evaluating effectiveness according to designated behavioral indicators related to the specified change goals.

By focusing its efforts in this way, VISTA will substantially increase the possibilities for producing significant impact and for measuring it from readily available poverty community data.

A specific project embodying these elements is described and recommended in the report as a key step that VISTA should take to implement an improved programming and measurement system.

INTRODUCTION

Determining the feasibility of measuring VISTA impact is more than a matter of identifying previously-ignored indicators of improved welfare or developing esoteric new scales for exploring attitude changes among the poor. Before these problems of operational specification are considered, the investigator must review:

(1) The nature and purposes of the VISTA input, the variable whose effects are being considered;

(2) The interactions and relationships of that variable with "the poverty community," a term subject to various definitions with different consequences for measurement;

(3) The identifiable results or effects that may be attributable, by observation or analysis, to these relationships and interactions.

What has been called "the possibility of slippage between conceptual definition and operational specification" in social measurement, by scholars concerned primarily with the latter,[1] is of major concern only after there is general agreement on conceptual definition of the changes to be measured.

This study is first concerned with identifying and exploring the consequences of, and possible solutions for, the formidable conceptual problems involved in looking at the impact of VISTA.

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[1] Unobtrusive Measures, Eugene J. Webb, et al., Rand McNally, Chicago, 1966, p. 5.

There follow some attempts at operational specification, involving the blocking out of alternatives for measuring the impact of specific VISTA projects in the Mid-Atlantic Region.

The report also suggests a "framework for feasibility," a set of realizable conditions that would improve the effectiveness of VISTA performance and the possibilities for measuring the impact of that performance. By facilitating the conceptual definition of VISTA impact, this framework also simplifies the measurement problem.

The choice of program activities and arrangements should not be dictated by the possibilities for quantifiable impact or the ease of measurement, but the achievement of lasting beneficial results from VISTA activities is reflected in successful measurement efforts. Results are often more measurable when they are more significant. This study confirms once again that attempts to measure results or impact are not academic exercises. They are an integral part of the self-evaluation process that produces more useful programs.

I. CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS

A. The VISTA Resource

VISTA is a program that assigns volunteers to work for many sponsors in many ways. It is not a self-contained social action program directed to the alleviation of specific social problems, with defined goals and an hypothesis about the likely effects of a particular approach, technique, or resource, when applied to achievement of those goals.

The assignment of volunteers to sponsoring organizations, in groups seldom exceeding ten and frequently on an individual basis, is one cause of the diffuseness of purpose that clouds VISTA impact and makes it difficult to measure. The diversity of assigned activities, sponsor goals, and volunteer interpretations of them, adds to the problem. Lack of program focus also results in part from the requirements for using volunteers effectively. To harness their energy and enthusiasm, something more than a structured job assignment or a narrowly defined goal is thought to be necessary. The Executive Director of the Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Community Action Agency, put it this way:

> "It is my philosophy that we should evaluate each individual VISTA to determine where he can best serve the community, and in what capacity he wants to serve the community, before we make our decision on how to utilize him. This is what our agency has attempted to do with

> all our VISTAs, and it has been our experience that when the VISTA is challenged and delighted with his assigned work, not only is he fulfilled as an individual, he also provides our agency with extremely valuable assistance in fulfilling our goals. It seems to be working out very well." MPTC Bulletin, Temple University, October 1968, p. 3.

This approach relegates VISTA to the role of broker between sponsors and individual volunteers, seriously limiting opportunities to concentrate on specific program goals. The impact of VISTA must then be distilled from review of sponsors' accomplishments and from looking at the diverse activities of volunteers' outside job assignments. The flexibility and accommodation necessary to fulfill volunteers as individuals produces a situation in which "...the computer has not yet been built that can classify and organize in some rational manner the diverse individual activities of several thousand volunteers."[2]

The VISTA program could be limited to sponsors chosen for similarity of goals and providing assignments geared to a few well-defined objectives. The small numbers working with each sponsor would then create a type of cross-section program concentration. The current VISTA program that assigns one professional worker to each of 20 different cities to assist in the specific task of mobilizing "Citizen Volunteers" illustrates the type of concentration that could be applied to all VISTA projects. However, this is not a typical VISTA pattern. Any study of impact based on current programming must deal with an input that is spread thinly over a variety of activities and purposes. It is best defined by "what it is" and "how it works" and not by any behavorial change goals identified in advance. VISTA is "process-oriented" rather than "end-oriented."[3] The identification of impact involves examining the process and exploring its likely consequences. This is a different and more difficult task than reviewing the results of action programs aimed at specified change goals.

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[2] S. A. Levitan, VISTA - The Great Society's Domestic Volunteers, in Poverty and Human Resources Abstracts, Univ. of Mich., Summer 1968, p. 18.

B. The VISTA Process and Presence

The VISTA process is conceptually separable from the work assignments of volunteers. "VISTA presence" or "being a VISTA" involves some relationship to a sponsor and contemplates performance of job activities, but is often independent of job content. Some job assignments are more consistent with the VISTA process and VISTAs may be more effective in some activities because of their approach, but program and presence can have different results. The statements of a consultant evaluating three VISTA associate youth projects that:

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[3] This distinction is explained further in Fellin, Rothman, and Meyer, "Implications of the Socio-Behavorial Approach for Community Organization Practice," in The Socio-Behavorial Approach and Applications to Social Work, Thomas, ed., Council on Social Work Education, New York, 1967.

> "The major accomplishments were mainly in the area of interpersonal relations and in experimental learning...";
> and
>
> "These...accomplishments grew out of the relationships of the Associates with the children and adults with whom they worked,"

illustrate the often minor role of the structured program assignments.[4] The accomplishments cited were attributed to presence and approach, not program activities. The report encourages program activities responsive to local needs mainly because they are likely to stimulate relationships that produce the more general results described.

A Columbia School of Social Work study[5] identified typical VISTA roles as 1) bridge for communication, 2) catalyst, 3) agency innovator, 4) provider of services, and 5) role model. These generalized activities, compatible with various program assignments, are correlates of the accomplishments previously cited, a way of translating "VISTA presence" into process terms. They also provide a theory for causally linking volunteer efforts and possible changes in the attitudes and behavior of people with whom they work. More important here than philosophical agreement on the essence of being a VISTA Volunteer is recognition that the input can produce both "program" and "presence" results.

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[4] Evaluation of VISTA Summer Associates Program, Greenleigh Associates, New York, 1967, p. 11.

[5] Today is Tomorrow, Marjorie H. Cantor, et al., VISTA 1967, Summary and Implications Volume, p. 5.

Because the goals and objectives of program and presence have not been identified, except in the most general terms, the search for impact involves (1) analyzing the likely consequences of VISTA presence and program activities, (2) identifying, from observation and reports, actual common results, and (3) using these findings to develop a prototype or model of impact, before (4) identifying measures and indicators of performance that are consistent with the conceptual definition.

C. Program Activities

Defining the program impact of VISTA Volunteers presents other problems. The sponsor system leads to a range of goals and activities that diffuses VISTA efforts. A common sponsor is no assurance that volunteers share common goals. Individual volunteers may engage in various activities addressed to quite different ends. Program activities are usually identified by job functions and not by desired results. The VISTA classifications of projects as rural, Indian, migrant, Job Corps, special, urban, and mental health, are by target group and each may include various goals and activities.

The impact of VISTA on poverty communities would be greater if program goals were sharpened and activities concentrated more effectively. Present programming too often makes VISTA a negligible part of the total effort directed to solving particular problems. The absence or diversity of program goals makes impact less visible and reduces the total of individual impacts or results by preventing attainment of the synergistic effects possible through a coordinated group effort aimed at a common objective. The work of ten volunteers in ten different activities is difficult to measure. More important, it is likely to be dissipated by failure to reach the critical level required for sustained impact than is a concerted effort by the same number to assist a poverty community in establishing an independent self-sustaining consumer cooperative, for example.

Immediate program activity results are more easily identified than the broader consequences of VISTA presence. The program results are intermediate steps in a longer-term pattern that merges much of theimpact of program and presence. Volunteer teaching and legal program assistance, for example, have distinctive effects that also contribute to the more general results of VISTA presence. This distinction is important in developing prototypes of VISTA impact. Our method seeks to describe the likely impact of VISTA presence and to identify any distinctive additional impacts of program activities. When most of the consequences of program activities are indistinguishable from those attributable to presence, total impact can be calculated without separate measurement of the program activity results.

D. The Impact of Program and Presence

The impact of VISTA on poverty communities includes effects on individuals, groups and agencies. There may also be consequences for entire systems, such as those for delivery of particular services and for communication of needs. Most VISTAs, regardless of particular project activities or goals, share certain common characteristics and are part of the same "process."

Process goals are defined by VISTA only in very general terms. VISTA and the volunteers have assumed that good things will happen if dedicated volunteers are sent to live with the poor and allowed some freedom to act outside the structured bounds of sponsor job assignments. VISTA is now concerned to find out what types of good things have happened, if any, and to measure them, if possible. Successful measurement efforts should make explicit the goals that have been implicit in volunteer involvement and may suggest ways of improving effectiveness in attaining them. The goal has, in effect, been to "be a VISTA," and the question is how this affects the individuals, groups, agencies, and systems among which efforts to achieve it take place.

Achievement of program goals is influenced by the VISTA approach and the impact of VISTA presence is affected by the program activities of the volunteers. The distinction is nevertheless helpful in analyzing VISTA impact and determining the utility of attempting various types of measurements or measuring particular projects. It is relevant to all types of VISTA activities, though the presence effects of Job Corps and mental health work, for example, are quite different from those of work with migrant groups.

VISTA presence and program activities produce results with varying degrees of immediacy, visibility, and describability. In tutorial programs, for example, the number of students participating for a specific period of time can be counted. Whether they learn anything as a result is more difficult to calculate. Assuming that they do, it is still harder to recognize and describe any effects that may be attributable to their expanded knowledge or understanding. The initial outcome, "number of students taught," is direct and easily measured. It is unfortunately only an indication of input, level of effort, and is little help in appraising the value, importance, or effectiveness of VISTA, unless the merits of tutoring are assumed without further inquiry.

The VISTA Activities Surveys record inputs and direct outcomes of this type. Although the interviewer's Manual for those conducting the Surveys urges that "indirect" results also be noted, this is rarely done, possibly because these are more difficult to identify and describe. The progress of those tutored, for example, is seldom included. More remote results, such as the effects of successful tutoring on conduct and attitudes of the students involved, are even less likely to be reported currently in the Activities Survey or any other documents received by VISTA. The concern to measure "impact" reflects VISTA's belief that the more remote consequences of volunteer efforts may be significant enough to justify development of instruments going beyond those presently in use.

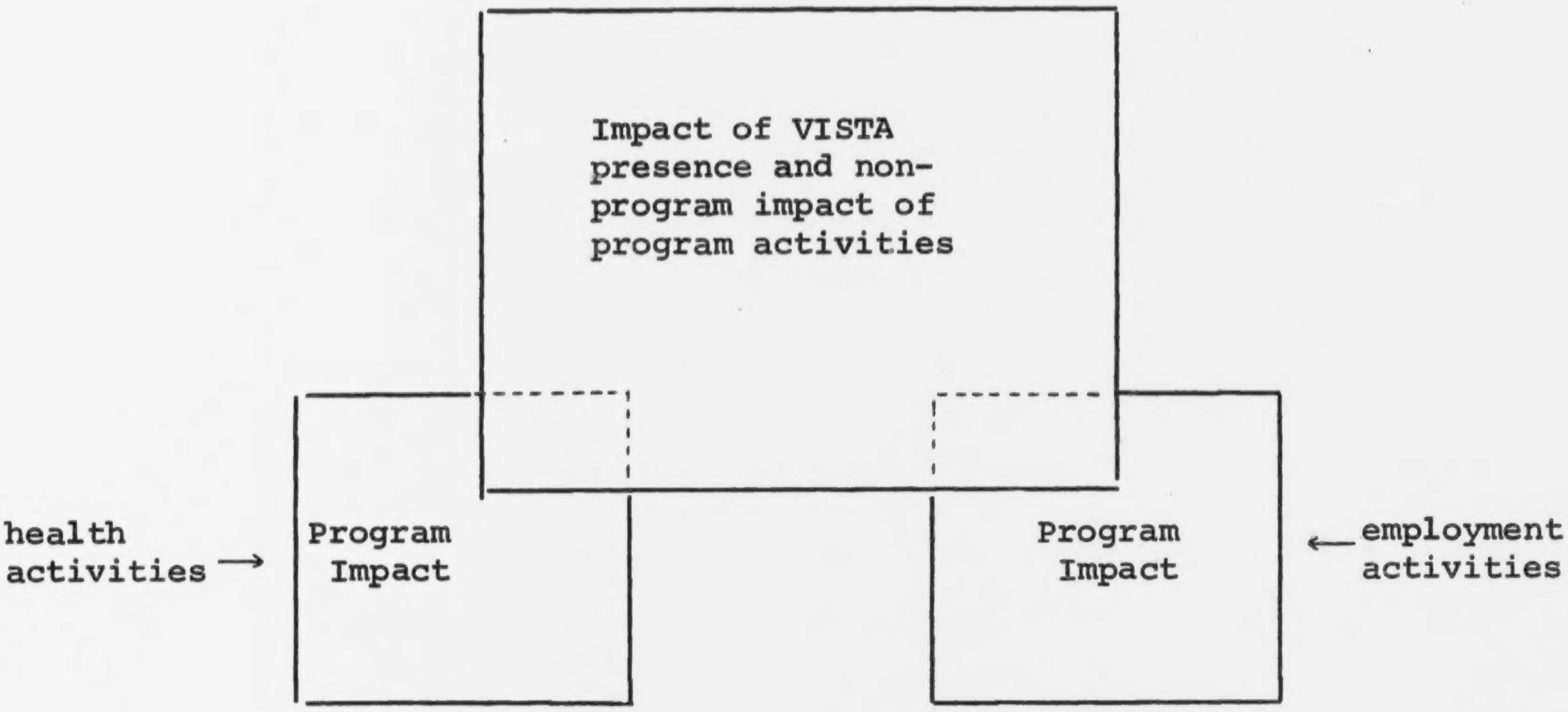
Impact has magnitude and duration. The importance of particular manifestations varies with these dimensions and the relationship of the impact to the ultimate goals of anti-poverty efforts. Achievement of intermediate goals is valued for itself and because it contributes to eliminating poverty. While philosophical discussions concerning what is intermediate or final are helpful in clarifying objectives, the measurement of impact encompasses both. In community organization, for example, the immediate results may include the gathering together of a number of people on a regular basis and the formalization of their relationship by organization. This, in turn, may improve and reflect improvement in, social cohesion aspiration levels, participation in decision-making, tolerance, and other aspects of group life. To some, these consequences are sufficiently important to be ends in themselves, changes vital to improving the quality of life. For others, they mean little except as intermediate steps that may lead to demonstrable improvement in satisfaction of wants, living standards, and other more tangible evidences of leaving poverty.

The choice of variables or effects to be measured must be a product of preconceptions about relative importance, since measurement involves abstracting only part of the universe of events. Because the broad goal of VISTA, helping the poor to move out of poverty, is served by so many types of results, and the program produces such a variety, early restrictive preconceptions must be avoided. Roaming freely in the early conceptualization and observation of impact reduces the risk of missing significant findings.

The impact of VISTA activities and presence can be viewed as a spectrum leading from immediate to more remote consequences, eliminating some concern for the labelling of "intermediate" accomplishments. The quality of remoteness includes both visibility and time-distance. Tutoring and learning, for example, may take place simultaneously, but the learning is less easily identified. The learning may eventually help a boy find a job, and here the remoteness is temporal as well.

Program activities are likely to produce some direct, immediate effects for which there is no equivalent as a result of presence. The absence of readily apparent consequences of the volunteer's living, and distinctive role, in poverty communities forces attention to more remote results in an effort to explain the significance of that presence.

The distinction between program and presence impact is partially obscured in relation to more remote results. Increased communication among neighbors, reduction of tensions, and improvement of self-images, effects cited in a pilot measurement study sponsored by VISTA[6], are attributable to both types of impact. Nevertheless, it is clear that program activities may vary in their contribution to these results and may, at the same time, have other dissimilar effects that are a function of the activity itself. The major VISTA activities can be viewed as having a set of overlapping consequences that can be illustrated, using health and employment as examples, in this way:


Impact of VISTA presence and non-program impact of program activities
health activities
Program Impact
Program Impact
employment activities

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[6] Evaluation of VISTA Summer Associates Program, Greenleigh Associates, New York 1967, p. VII-4.

These fine distinctions, though difficult to observe in the events, are useful in the conceptualization of VISTA impact. It is not uncommon, for example, to have VISTA personnel acknowledge that a particular job assignment is useful as an "entry into the community." This emphasizes that while impressive program results are not anticipated, the program activities are expected to contribute heavily to the intangible, more general goals that are primarily the province of VISTA presence.

D-1. Program Impact

The distinction between program and presence impacts provides a basis for analyzing the effects of VISTA. The VISTA Activities Survey establishes ten categories of activities:

1. Education
2. Recreation
3. Housing and Neighborhood Improvement
4. Health
5. Income Improvement
6. Employment
7. Legal
8. Individual Assistance
9. Community Organization
10. Supporting Functions

For each of these categories a cluster of likely results, based on observation and analysis, can be identified. The combined impact of VISTA presence and the non-program effects of program activities can also be described. Following this process, the array can be analyzed for similarities, problems of causation, and probable magnitude, to restrict the search for indicators to those most likely to be useful.

The Activities Surveys simplify this task because direct results of volunteer activities are included in them. Only effects less apparent or more remote in time, but often highly significant, need be considered in developing other measurements. The spectrum of program consequences overlaps with the more general presence-type consequences, making it almost impossible to separate or measure the latter results for each activity. In education, for example, the number of students taught, trained or counseled, the number of facilities provided, and the number of parents induced to participate in education-related organizations, are readily derived from Activities Surveys. The effects of the education activities on self-images, family functioning, social integration, and similar broad variables, are combined in the measure of presence impact. There remains only a middle ground of outcomes that are directly related to the educational program activities but are more remote than those reported in Activities Surveys. These are principally effects on learning achievement, school attendance, and behavior.

This conceptual identification is independent of the actual occurrence of these results in particular cases and the tracing of them to VISTA. It is no more than an hypothesis about possible effects, designed to assist in the measurement process. The program activities may not yield these types of results, or may do so to a degree that makes measurement impractical, but the hypothesis is an indispensable step to discovering this. Because the possible intermediate consequences are more tangible and flow directly from the immediate outcomes reported in other instruments, attribution of them to VISTA is less difficult than for more remote intangible impacts involving greater possibility of intervening or other contributing causes.

For recreation, the middle ground of likely impact is negligible. After we know the number of participants, the type and extent of their participation, effects become difficult to distinguish from those generally attributable to the presence of interested VISTA Volunteers. This absence of intermediate consequences explains the often-expressed skepticism, in both Peace Corps and VISTA, about recreation as a program activity.

Housing and Neighborhood Improvement activities may yield results, in addition to the type of immediate outcomes reported in Activities Surveys, that are clearly program-related. The person who improves his home with a volunteer's help may make other improvements without the volunteer. The average period of occupancy may be increased among tenants organized into an effective council. Delinquency and crime may decline because of more street lights or improvements in a neighborhood. Selecting a few of the more important secondary effects for measurement requires a judgment of both their intrinsic importance and the likelihood of their occurrence.

This will be attempted later, when alternative measures are considered. Our purpose here is to illustrate secondary, middle-level effects and to show their variation among VISTA program activities. The Output Analysis of VISTA in Columbus, Exhibit I annexed to the report[7] of subcommittee hearings on the FY69 OEO appropriation, uses a concept of "secondary results" that is similar, but less systematic and analytical than the approach suggested here.

Volunteer health activities result in numbers of people being examined or treated, attending health education classes, and similar outcomes. As in education, the Activities Surveys rarely describe the consequences of these initial, immediately apparent occurrences. Reduced disease incidence, adoption of particular health practices, and decline in school and job absenteeism, are aspects of the impact of successful activities in health.

For income improvement and employment activities impact includes all of the benefits flowing from having more money. Besides reductions in the number of people on welfare, it may be possible to identify increased consumption of food, growth of retail sales, expanded home ownership, and more tax payments, to amplify the significance of Activities Surveys reports of jobs found or cooperatives organized. Economic betterment is also part of the more general category of greater satisfaction of wants, which encompasses the entire "improved quality of life" goal to which all VISTA efforts are addressed.

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[7] Part 6, Hearings before Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, on Departments of Labor and Health, Education and Welfare, and Related Agencies, 90th Congress, Second Session, 1968, pp. 496 ff.

The legal services performed by VISTA volunteers result in a number of clients being served. These clients are primarily groups and organizations. Services are concentrated on assisting with the legal aspects of program development and effective negotiation of grievances. The impact of these efforts, beyond the fact that groups without previous access to legal services can now get help, reflects the tangible benefits of that help. For example, housing violations corrected, reductions in the number of evictions, and dollar volume of repairs made after complaint, are possible measures of the impact of intervention in tenant organization disputes with landlords. The number of funding applications completed, and grants received, organizations assisted to comply with requirements for legal status, and grievances resolved, are examples of other intermediate measures.

Because VISTA lawyers are not generally being used to give conventional legal help to individual clients, impact must be expressed primarily in terms of the goals of group clients. These goals are, in the beginning, indistinguishable from those of community organization work. Though substantive changes effected as a result of organization will eventually justify tabulation, the intermediate measures of community organization are concerned with whether an organization exists and functions effectively. Only after the organization has had opportunity to pursue specific project goals should it, or the work of volunteers assisting it, be appraised in terms of more tangible accomplishments.

Measurement of the program impacts described, and others like them, can be done on an individual or project basis. Where a group of volunteers are doing similar work addressed to common program goals, the task is simplified. Review of Activities Surveys suggests that many volunteer program accomplishments are often distinct from ostensible project assignments. Individuals independently pursue various activities that have program-type impacts. Before considering limitation of program impact measurement to projects with well-defined program activities, VISTA might experiment with some attempts to measure individual program results by screening Activities Surveys and following up program-type outcomes identified. More extensive investigations of consequences would be based on, and tabulated according to, measures included in the education, legal, health, home and income improvement categories suggested here.

In the absence of a routine management information reporting system, the cost of further measurement efforts must be weighed against the extent and utility of findings. Perhaps the easiest and most economical way to incorporate this type of measurement into the VISTA system is to recast the Activities Surveys, giving more emphasis to selective intensive measurements of these program-type outcomes. The results of individual assistance and community organization activities require different treatment.

D-1-a. Supporting Functions

VISTA's activity categories of individual assistance, community organization, and supporting functions do not involve direct provision of program services. The supporting function role involves "slot filling" and often reflects sponsor misunderstanding of VISTA intent. Volunteers occasionally serve as part of the sponsor's administrative or clerical staff, frequently performing structured assignments for which little impact beyond the actual task performed can be identified. Common Activity Survey entries like "cooked for 35 children at center" or "assisted staff with administrative work" describe important work, but any VISTA contribution to broader goals is primarily a matter of presence and is measurable as part of the more general VISTA impact.

The impact of volunteers performing supporting functions is reflected in the reports of their sponsors. This is also true of many program activities. Volunteers making a survey for a health agency, for example, are part of the broad effort and impact of that agency. VISTA could let the reports of sponsors be the measure of volunteer impact, viewing itself as a provider of manpower to useful institutions. Impact would be reflected in the number and type of satisfied sponsors and VISTAs. Justification for treating VISTA as something beyond a placement agency comes from the often stated and less frequently documented assertion that the VISTA is more than an employee of the sponsor and brings to the poverty community a presence and approach that yields consequences beyond those resulting from conventional performance of a job assignment.

D-1-b. Individual Assistance

Individual assistance is the essence of that presence. Some volunteers are assigned full-time casework roles and practically all are involved for part of their time in various forms of individual assistance. The establishment of personal relationships with poor people through outreach and continued contact, and the development of mutual trust and confidence, often produce reliance on the volunteer for moral support and help with day-to-day problems and, through this, may stimulate greater efforts by the poor to help themselves. Activities Surveys are little help beyond identifying the number of people served or referred and the diversity of assistance given by volunteers challenges easy tabulation. Measuring what happens to people who are "served" by VISTA calls for identification of results at a level of generalization broad enough to encompass the variety of outcomes.

The paradox that "helping people to help themselves" often involves referring them to available services makes their increased use of services an ambiguous measure of that intangible, since more dependency may also be involved. Nevertheless, changes in the use of health, welfare, employment, and other services are an important aspect of VISTA impact.

Although the indirect results of individual referrals may be similar to those for other volunteer program activities, the VISTA contribution is primarily in the linking and motivation that produce referral and participation. The change in attitude and conduct may be more important than the delivery of services. For example, if 20 people are motivated by volunteers to seek health services and their physical well-being later improves, the impact of VISTA is greater than what occurs if the 20 arrive at the health agency independently and there receive program services from volunteers. This distinction reflects the intangible quality of much presence impact in comparison to the more concrete results usually associated with program activities.

D-1-c. Community Organization

Community organization, like individual assistance, cuts across program lines. Both categories are intermediate to many different program or service goals, though also process goals in themselves. Activities Surveys that include community organization efforts report number of participants, number of meetings, and number of organizations formed, but VISTA Volunteers and others concerned with community organization are quick to assert that these figures do not give useful or complete pictures of effectiveness or impact. Among the process goals cited are "changing attitudes," "increasing participation in decision-making," "helping people to work together and help themselves," "giving the poor political power," "developing leaders," and "improving problem-solving ability." The intermediate results of some community organization activity are similar to the outcomes of the common program activities. For example, organization is often a vital aspect of efforts to improve housing conditions. VISTA acknowledges this by excluding from the community organization category in Activities Survey instructions:

> "Community organization activities which are directed exclusively toward the areas of education, health, income improvement, employment, or housing and neighborhood improvement."

The remaining activities are a kind of pure, undifferentiated community organization, for which intermediate results, what the organizations "accomplished," are initially less important to the organizers than the process itself. The Activities Surveys already capture many of these intermediate results (e.g., "organized protest to mayor's office" or "group petitioned and street light was installed") and there is little current need for other measures at this level. The measurement of impact at the broader level of generalization implied by the various statements of objectives goes to the roots of the VISTA problem. The program activities of volunteers (health, recreation and the other functional categories) and the activities that include individual assistance, community organization, and extra-program presence, are suspected to have a generalized positive impact that is more difficult to conceptualize than program results and far harder to identify and measure. While secondary program results are tangible and measurable directly, the impact of process or presence, together with other consequences of program activity, is primarily intangible and therefore measurable only indirectly by reference to answers or other indicators assumed to reflect it. Recognition that an intangible such as "changing attitudes" occurs between activity and indicator is useful in defining goals and directing emphasis, but need not impede the appraisal of performance and the expression of impact by reference to less abstract, related variables.

D-2. Presence Impact

To the extent that the activities and presence of VISTA Volunteers are successful, the attitudes and conduct of the poor are influenced. The program activities, too, contribute to the total effect on attitudes. Although VISTA has not been specific about the attitudinal or behavioral changes desired, some common statements can be identified. In individual terms, these might include:

1. higher achievement motivation
2. more tolerance of strangers and new ideas
3. more perception of needs and satisfaction of wants
4. improved self-images
5. greater problem-solving and coping ability
6. broader experience and confidence in ability to affect personal situation
7. improved family functioning

In group terms, the effects include:

1. increased participation in decisions affecting group welfare
2. increased communication, reduction of social distance
3. greater sense of community identity
4. greater confidence and capacity for social action
5. more social power
6. reduced tension
7. linkages with other groups

These goal statements, assembled from both academic literature and reference to VISTA Activities Surveys and Evaluation Reports, are used to describe changes desired or anticipated by VISTA and others as results of volunteer efforts.

An assumption that the "intangible results" contribute to the elimination of poverty underlies VISTA efforts. The measurement of these results does not require commitment to this view or to the reverse, that the elimination of economic poverty will itself bring about these desired attitude changes. After impact has been identified and measured, the comparative effectiveness of approaches to influencing it can be examined.

Although all results are manifested through individual attitudes and behavior, the dichotomy of individual and social effects is useful for conceptualizing what is to be measured. Despite some overlapping (e.g., when individual self-images improve, social participation is likely to increase), the nature of VISTA efforts militates in favor of the dual description. Individual assistance and community organization produce individual growth and group change. The impact of VISTA on poverty communities includes both and individual volunteers vary in emphasizing each of them.

The VISTA program is transitional assistance designed to bring individuals and their communities to a non-poverty condition by improving individual and social competence, morale, and power. The intangible change goals listed previously are encompassed by these categories. Improved individual and social knowledge, morale, and power result in more effective adaptive behavior by the poor. Provision of services, by VISTA and other agencies, is intermediate to these ends, and VISTA impact includes both the tangible results of services and any intangible consequences. These simple distinctions are enough to suggest a framework for measurement. However, before outlining the details of specific measurement techniques, some consideration of previous attempts to measure attitudes will illustrate the difficulties involved in moving from the analytical framework to its operational specification.

E. Response as an Indicator of Attitude Change

The following quotation effectively explains why any measurement of attitudes must be indirect:

> "The key problem of a system of social indicators... is that we can never measure the variables that interest us directly, but we must select surrogates that stand in the place of such variables. Thus, we may be interested in whether or not a person is "ambitious," but we cannot observe ambition per se. We can ask a person questions and listen to his answers, or we can observe how hard he will work, and for what rewards. From such observations we can then make an inference that he is or is not ambitious." [8]

The "surrogates" referred to are called indicators and this term is widely used to refer to both: (1) public data that is useful in describing abstractions such as "poverty" and "urbanization";[9] and (2) behaviors or responses that are accepted as indicators of attitudes.[10]

The distinction between environmental and behavioral indicators is not always well-recognized.[11] Although they often serve the same purposes, there are clear differences in the theoretical bases underlying them. Measurement of VISTA impact, with present programming practices, involves primarily the use of response and behavioral indicators.

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[8] Social Indicators, Raymond Bauer, ed., MIT Press, Cambridge, 1966, p. 45.

[9] Alker, Deutsch, and Lasswell, World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1964.

[10] Webb, Unobtrusive Measures, supra (Note 1), describes the distinction in detail.

[11] See, for example, "Social Goals and Indicators for American Society," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 373 (2 parts), 1967.

Literature related to measurement of the changes in individual and group attitudes identified as possible outcomes of VISTA work falls in the two categories of asking people what they think (or asking questions designed to elicit this information indirectly) and making inferences about their attitudes from observing what they do. In both cases, a conclusion that the questions asked or behavior observed are related to the attitudes being explored is ultimately a matter of demonstrated utility and scientific acceptance. Development of better indicators is partly a process of continually refining them to increase acceptance of particular hypotheses among the concerned academic and other professional communities.

Various scales and other instruments have been developed to measure attitudes similar to those mentioned in the conceptual definition of VISTA impact. Consideration of a few suggests that their applicability to VISTA may be very limited. The details of specific tests are included to add realism to consideration of their use with VISTA target populations. These examples are typical of the many types of measurement techniques reviewed. A selected bibliography is included at the end of the report.

E-1. Achievement Motivation

Most investigators have chosen to concentrate on measuring a single aspect of personality. The work of David McClelland on achievement motivation is particularly well-known.[12] Using a form of Murray's Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), he and his associates developed a scale measuring achievement motive as revealed in fantasy. The indirectness of the approach permits results which predict actual performance more accurately than do direct verbal measures of achievement. This is because people who say they're motivated are often deceiving themselves or the investigators. As one reviewer put it: "Many persons holding consciously to a given achievement-oriented ideology lack the strong internal motivation impelling them to strive hard to achieve."[13]

The test consists of showing respondents four ambiguous pictures projected separately for twenty seconds each on a screen. The respondent is then given four minutes to write a story about what he sees in a picture. He is given certain cues to aid him in producing a "complete" story (What is happening? Who are the persons? What has led up to the situation? What is wanted? By whom?

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[12] See, for example, The Achievement Motive, Appleton, New York, 1953; The Achieving Society, Van Nostrand Publ. Co., Princeton, 1961.

[13] Harry J. Crockett, "Review of The Achieving Society," in Social Forces, December 1962, pp. 208-209.

What will happen? What will be done?). If the story makes references to achievement goals, the scorer assigns points to various sub-categories according to a specific system. The achievement motive score for a respondent is the sum of the scores on all his test stories.

This type of test has fewer biases than the typical questionnaire/interview approach and there is evidence that the scale of results correlates well with later efforts to achieve. VISTA could consider using volunteers to administer McClelland's program for changing achievement motivation and then measuring their impact with his test. In the absence of this or similar clear program focus, the achievement motivation test can pick up only a small part of VISTA impact.

E-2. Control of Environment

Studies that probe an individual's attitude toward his environment look at a number of related feelings such as meaningless, powerlessness, normlessness, a feeling of being manipulated, and social isolation. Underlying all of these feelings is the individual's awareness of his lack of power. This feeling is relative to aspirations and expectations, and difficult to measure except on a scale that permits a person to make up his own absolutes and to reflect in relative terms his nearness to or distance from achieving them.

For example, Liverant devised an inventory of about 150 forced-choice combinations of statements, which were paired according to internal-and external-control dimensions of the same problem.[14] There are several briefer adaptions, including the twelve pairs of statements in the Neal and Rettig "Powerlessness Scale."[15] (The respondents in this study were from Columbus, Ohio, and were divided into categories of manual and non-manual workers.) In each pair of sentences, the respondent checks the statement he feels most strongly to be true. The statements are set up to offer a powerlessness v. mastery choice in each case. Some of the questions were:

____I think we have adequate means for preventing run-away inflation.

____There's very little we can do to keep prices from going higher.

____Persons like myself have little chance of protecting our personal interests when they conflict with those of strong pressure groups.

____I feel that we have adequate ways of coping with pressure groups.

____More and more, I feel helpless in the face of what's happening in the world today.

____I sometimes feel personally to blame for the sad state of affairs in our government.

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[14] Sociological Measurement, Charles M. Bonjean, ed., Chandler Publ. Co., San Francisco, 1967, p. 21 ff.

[15] Neal and Rettig, "Dimensions of Alienation Among Manual and Non-Manual Workers," American Sociological Review, August 1963, pp. 599-608.

____It is only wishful thinking to believe that one can really influence what happens in society at large.

____People like me can change the course of world events if we make ourselves heard.

The test is short and easily scored. Each question is scored dichotomously (one for "powerlessness" answers and "0" for mastery answers) and the scores are summed.

Assuming that the questions of this test could be adapted to concerns and capabilities of VISTA target groups, and that other methodological and administrative problems can be accommodated, the translation of a more positive attitude about control of environment into VISTA impact is still limiting. It leaves unanswered the value or consequences of these changes to the poor people involved and captures only part of the effect of VISTA on their feelings and life cycles.

E-3. Alienation

The "Anomia Scale" of Srole[16] is still used in alienation studies when an index of anomia (absence of values or norms) is desired. It consists of five questions with which the respondent agrees or disagrees. There is also a fifteen-question form, but the five question scale was designed as a minimum feasible for use with scales measuring several other attitudes:

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[16] Leo Srole, "Social Integration and Certain Corollaries: An Exploratory Study," American Sociological Review, December 1956, pp. 709-716.

1. There's little use writing to public officials because often they aren't really interested in the problems of the average man.
2. These days a person doesn't really know whom he can count on.
3. Nowadays, a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself.
4. In spite of what some people say, the lot of the average man is getting worse, not better.
5. It's hardly fair to bring children into the world with the way things look for the future.

Each affirmative response is scored 1, each negative 0, and a score of 5 represents the anomic end of the scale. Srole explains that the negative tenor of the questions is a result of his attempts to purify the test of cultural cliches that would have made the scale liable to verbal biases.

The Srole scale has been used frequently as a measurement of one variable in a study. The questions are worded so that they have broad application in time, geographical region, and socio-economic level. Like the other tests and scales, this example might be useful for spot probes of a particular aspect of VISTA impact.

E-4. Case-Movement Scales

Although the approaches of VISTA Volunteers and social workers differ, their aims are sufficiently alike to suggest social case work evaluation techniques as a model for use in measuring VISTA impact. The informal counseling that many volunteers do is a type of non-professional case work characterized by a degree of personal involvement and persistence that the harried professional has difficulty duplicating. This informal "VISTA approach" reflects the recent interest in "reaching out" case work, the non-problem and situational techniques that view the caseworker and sponsor agency as integral parts of the daily life of the target population.[17]

Certain aspects of casework lend themselves well to quantification. Number of persons served, number, length and location of significant contacts, and number of referrals, for example, can be processed by computer to produce monthly reports.[18] But this type of report tells little about the results of these efforts.

The progress of clients in terms of improved attitudes, self-sufficiency, effective functioning, and other less tangible statements of purpose, has remained extremely difficult to measure and attribute. Supervisors of social case workers, if not the case workers themselves, early recognized the need for some sort of qualitative measurement scale[19] and various refinements of scales moving from "progress" through "no progress" to "regression" are widely used. Some of them attempt to weight the different problems involved in each case. These scales are heavily dependent on the case worker's subjective judgment of attitudinal progress and their utility, particularly for expressing program impact, is very limited.

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[17] Robert Sunley, "New Dimensions in Reaching-Out Casework," Social Work, April 1968, pp. 66-7.

[18] Roy P. Wakeman, "Using Data Processing to Analyze Worker Activity," Social Work Practice 1965 (National Conference on Social Welfare Papers). New York: Columbia University Press, 1965, pp.54-63.

F. Attitudes and Behavior

In the absence of specific attitude change goals for VISTA efforts, impact is likely to be reflected through changes in a variety of feelings and beliefs that cannot be described by artificially forcing them into categories like achievement motivation control over environment, and alienation. The concept of an individual's "belief system" or "culture" expresses the generalized quality of VISTA impact. Any attempt to measure this broader area involves more extensive testing than the single-concept scale examples previously discussed and is also subject to more serious questions of utility.

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[19] Ellery F. Reed, "A Scoring System for the Evaluation of Social Casework," Social Science Review, June 1931, pp. 214-36; J. McVicker Hunt and Leonard S. Kogan, Measuring Results in Social Casework: A Manual on Judging Movement. New York: Family Service Association of America 1950 (as discussed in D.G. French, An Approach to Measuring Results in Social Work. New York: Columbia University Press 1952; Paul Therkildson and Philip Reno, "Cost-Benefit Evaluation of the Bernalillo County Work Experience Project," Welfare in Review, March-April 1968, pp. 1-12.

A recent attempt[20] to inventory the belief systems of culturally deprived teenagers demonstrates some of the problems involved in trying to combine subjective attitude measures into a broader instrument. Investigators tried to measure "value, norms, aspirations, self-image, and interpersonal relations..." through structured in-depth interviews. They were astounded by their subjects' inability to relate actions to goals and the lack of internal consistency in their responses. As important as the conclusions derived for educational policies are the implications for measurement methodology. The findings emphasize the complex relationships between attitudes and behavior and the serious deficiencies of verbal responses as representations of feelings.

Assuming that VISTA has a demonstrable impact in changing belief systems of target populations, as measured by this approach, the utility or significance of the findings would be obscured by their ambiguous relationship to behavior. Despite the possibility that behavior responses may lag behind attitude changes, the use of behavioral indicators is more promising for measuring VISTA impact than reliance on attempts to capture subjective reactions by interviews and tests.

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[20] Deborah I. Offenbacher, "Cultures in Conflict," Urban Review, May 1968, pp. 2-6.

There is an extensive literature on the relationship of attitudes and behavior.[21] The links between them are tenuous and the predictability of behavior from statements or other measures of attitude is often very limited.[22] Attitudes are manifested in different ways, depending on the object or situation being confronted.[23] The assumed relationships between how people feel about things, their attitudes, and what they do in particular situations, their behavior, are, nevertheless, the practical basis for many social programs, including VISTA.

The use of behavioral indicators of attitude is a compromise with the uncertainties and lack of knowledge evident in discussions of attitude as a scientific concept. The identification of certain types of behavior that are accepted as generally reflecting a certain attitude or attitudes makes possible a more objective scale for attitude measurement. The hypothesis that a particular collection of attitudes has changed may be confirmed by consistent movement of indicators, even though other factors are involved in the determination of each specific behavior. It may be impossible, with the present state of knowledge, to define attitude other than tautologically, as that which is manifested by changes in the indicators. The concept is still useful for making clearer the process by which changes in behavior are likely to be influenced and for forcing attention to goals beyond the tangible accomplishments and physical monuments that are too often mistaken for ends in themselves.

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[21] A good survey is found in Melvin L. DeFleur and Frank R. Westie, "Attitude as a Scientific Concept," Social Forces, October 1963, pp. 17-30.

[22] See the early statement of R.T. LaPiere, "Attitudes vs. Action," Social Forces, December 1934, pp. 230-37, and Milton Rokeach, "Attitude Change and Behavioral Change," Public Opinion Quarterly, (Winter 1966-67), pp. 529-550.

[23] This is developed extensively in Milton Rokeach and L. Mezei, "Race and Shared Belief as Factors in Social Choice," Science, V.151 (1966), pp. 167-72.

If the purpose of measurement is to describe a substantial portion of VISTA impact in numerical terms, attitude changes can be presented through use of indicators that reflect the range of attitudes likely to be influenced by VISTA. Instead of seeking to measure separately changes in aspiration levels, achievement motivation, self-image, attitudes toward cooperation, and other states of mind, VISTA might better develop a set of measures that relates to all of them. Since the program is not directed to changing any single attitude beyond what is implied in "helping the poor to help themselves," impact will involve all sorts of attitudes that bear some relation to this general goal. Behavioral indicators of these attitudes overlap and, by measuring the cluster of attitudes, some precision is sacrificed in order to capture the broader effect.

G. Behavior as an Indicator of Attitude Change

The indicators of improved individual and group attitudes must be selected from among the types of behavioral changes analytically associated with these attitudes. Choice must be influenced, too, by the varied contexts of VISTA work, since behavioral manifestations vary with the approach of the change agent and the situation of the persons or groups affected. The indicators of progress toward middle-class behavior are not necessarily appropriate to the culture and aspirations of VISTA constituencies.

Because the presence of VISTA Volunteers is goal-directed only in very general terms, manifestations of impact may differ widely. The listing and measurement of a range of indicators is intended to assure identification of significant attitude changes in diverse situations. Choice should be based on the likelihood of the behavioral response appearing as attitude changes and judgment of its intrinsic importance as a reflection of the change. Weighting of various types of impact, construction of scales, and other judgmental aspects of data interpretation can be delayed until some returns are in. Early measurement efforts should look at many indicators with the intention of discarding some after review of findings.

The discussion that follows is an attempt to refine and make more specific the general measurement framework outlined in a recent article by two English community development workers.[24] They suggested nine characteristics that need changing for community development to take place:

1. apathy
2. feeling of inadequacy, inferiority and powerlessness
3. self-centeredness and antipathy
4. ignorance of resources and factors
5. prejudice
6. mistrust
7. gullibility
8. impetuosity
9. instability and insecurity

This list was followed by corresponding types of activities deemed to reflect these attitudes. Several indicators related to each activity were then described.

While the neat specification of attitudes is suspect, their general approach involves express recognition of the need to identify relationships between intangible goals and particular behavioral responses that is rare in both the literature and practice of community organization. A similar approach is discussed in a recent Indian work.[25] However, the field investigations described were so broad and ambitious that most of the possibilities for effectively describing indicators and measuring changes in them were neglected.

Though indicators of individual and social development overlap, the distinction is useful, since it corresponds to the VISTA activity categories of individual assistance and community organization. The relative impact of volunteer presence and work on the two types of indicators depends on assigned tasks, volunteer propensities and skills, and the character of target populations. Indicators of improved social functioning will be irrelevant for some projects and volunteers. Others may yield little evidence of individual improvement. Any judgment that certain indicators are inapplicable should be delayed until they have been tested with a variety of projects.

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[24] "Evaluation in Community Work," George Lovell and Graham Riches, Community Development Journal, October 1967, pp. 33-38.

[25] Social Work and Social Change, Sugata Das Gupta, Porter Sargent Publishing Co., Boston 1968.

A major impact that appears in all reports and evaluations of VISTA projects is the linking of poor people with private and public agencies and with each other. The presence of the volunteer among the poor, the personal interest and peer-to-peer approach of many, and their willingness to persist with particular individuals, lead to attitude changes that stimulate entry of many poor people into the world of community services and to broadened participation in this world by others. For those with little or no previous contact with these services, the iniatives inspired or guided by volunteers are a major step in "helping people to help themselves." Development of detached affiliations with public agencies and services is essential to improved status, particularly among the urban poor.[26]

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[26] This is illustrated well in Corinne Kirchner "Registration for Health Care in City Clinics," Human Organization, Fall 1968, pp. 250-259.

Despite possible dependency relationships created in delivery of some services, increased use of community resources is an indicator of improved individual competence, confidence, and contentment, for most of the VISTA constituency. While it is paradoxical that getting on welfare is progress for some and getting off is progress for others, at a higher level of generalization both may reflect self-help attitudes and efforts.

The referral and support role so typical of VISTA presence is not direct provision of services. The services received are not the measure of impact. The extent to which individuals continue to take initiative is more important. If referrals result in service, the chances of continued participation are greater, but the impact on the poverty community includes both the seeking of service and the response. Changes in the relationships and attitudes of individuals to public agencies are an important part of VISTA impact. That impact is greater when "persons served" continue to seek services after volunteers have departed.

The same analysis applies to community organization and group initiatives. The fact that an attempt is made to influence decisions or to work together on a group project is more important than the influence exerted or the success of the project. Once again, continued efforts are more likely to be stimulated by favorable results. The measurement of VISTA impact requires careful distinction between these two types of effects, despite their interdependence. Indicators of attitude change must not be limited to the more tangible results.

Because so much VISTA impact measurement is likely to be concerned with intangible social and psychological benefits of the program, the literature of cost-benefit analysis that emphasizes use of a money calculus in computing benefits is of limited applicability.[27] If VISTA succeeds in measuring the intangible benefits, appropriate pricing of them may then be relevant. At the present time, excessive concern for translation of benefits into money equivalents distracts attention from the primary problems of describing and measuring VISTA's intangible results.

G-1. Some Examples of Individual Improvement

(a) In addition to manifestations relating to use of community services and involvement in public programs, VISTA impact on attitudes may be revealed through changes in other variables. As aspiration levels and achievement motivation, for example, improve, it is reasonable to expect that school dropout rates among VISTA participants will be reduced. Truancy, daily attendance, tardiness, and other aspects of school life may also be affected, but the dropout rate is a convenient single reflection of any underlying attitude change. Choice of this indicator does not imply that VISTA is the only cause of all decisions to remain in school. If it changes consistently with other indicators chosen, the evidence may support a finding that VISTA had an impact on the attitudes common to all the types of conduct considered.

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[27] A. S. Levine, "Evaluating Program Effectiveness and Efficiency," Welfare in Review, February 1967, p.2.

(b) Since younger children cannot drop out in the same way as teenagers, parental concern as evidenced by non-disciplinary school visits might be a useful additional indicator of attitude change. This does not mean that every parent who ever talked to a VISTA is likely to rush to school, but suggests that if volunteer presence and activities do influence attitudes, school visits may increase as a result.

The search for indicators involves answering the question "what happens to the poor if their attitudes and knowledge are influenced by VISTA?" "They visit school" and "their children stay in school" are two hypotheses. "They have less trouble with the police" is another.

(c) Public reaction to community organization militancy sometimes produces increased harrassment by police and VISTA participants may occasionally choose to use arrest as a political technique. Neither reduced negative police contact nor any other indicator is fool-proof. Results must be reviewed in the light of extenuating circumstances and possible intervening causes. Nevertheless, the possibility of consistent patterns that reflect changes in target group attitudes merits exploration.

(d) Looking for a job is another indicator that reflects increased self-reliance, improved self-image, and morale. This need not involve resort to public agencies. There is evidence that Job Corps graduates, for example, often prefer to search for work independently.[28] While finding a job is clearly related to looking, the key measurement of attitude change is the change in initiative and that is the more appropriate indicator.

(e) Another indicator that deserves consideration is stability of residence. Constant moving is a common symptom of social disorganization and the inability to locate clientele is a frequent problem of social workers and researchers. Movement can also reflect initiative and upward mobility, but residential instability is more often an indication of the hopelessness, uncertainty, and desperation that accompany poverty.

In rural areas, stemming the flow of migration is frequenty an objective of anti-poverty efforts. Attitudes of increased hope, confidence, and ability to cope with environment may well be reflected in decisions to remain in, and improve, existing quarters. The applicability of this indicator may be ambiguous in some VISTA situations, but it is not intended to be used blindly.

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[28] An Evaluation of Project Threshold, American Technical Assistance Corporation, Washington, 1968, p. 79.

(f) Financial management is another important reflector of individual or family attitudes relating to movement out of poverty. If VISTA work influences attitudes as evaluation reports and volunteer questionnaires suggest, people involved with VISTA are less likely to be delinquent on financial obligations than they were before that involvement. They may be more in debt, but better able to meet obligations. This indicator is not dependent on higher incomes, though related to it. It reflects, rather, the change in life style that informed consumer guidance and similar counseling by VISTA can bring about. Confidence in the future and one's ability to affect it are reflected in financial practices of even the poorest, as the credit union movement has demonstrated many times.

G-2. Social Behavior

When VISTA Volunteers work in community organization, independently or by sponsor design, some indicators of impact on attitudes differ from those related to success in individual assistance. The underlying attitudes are closely related, but manifestations of change vary because of the emphasis on group organization and participation.

If community organization activities are successful, people organize, go to meetings, and pay dues. During a field visit to Rose Hill, North Carolina, VISTAs suggested that election of officers on the initiative of organization members is a more significant indication of their belief in the efficacy and permanence of the group than regular attendance at meetings. When attitudes are changed, more people register and vote, they read more, sign more petitions, and make more visits to public officials. They volunteer to help in money raising and other projects. Increased confidence is evidenced by participation in informal organizations and even by increased neighborliness.

This analysis does not suggest that improved cooperation and communication will necessarily reduce tension or reliance on violence. New awareness of the unresponsiveness of public agencies, and frustration at inability to remedy it, may produce varied reactions. The selection of indicators cannot reflect all consequences of changes in attitudes. Choice is based on perceptions of their relationship to the attitudes and consistency of their occurrence.

H. The Timing of Measurement

The simplest case in which measuring VISTA impact is not feasible occurs when there is none. Intermediate and more remote consequences of program and presence may be absent because of deficiencies in (1) volunteers, (2) response of the poor, (3) program approach or concept, and (4) sponsor management and direction. There is no assurance that behavior or attitudes among the poor will change because volunteers are among them, and, if they do, that the changes will be more than transient. Any measurement result has a time dimension that qualifies its significance.

The test of VISTA impact is what happens after volunteers leave the community, even though many outcomes beyond the direct results described in Activities Surveys and Completion of Service Questionnaires emerge and are identifiable during their period of service. Intangible results, particularly, are of little significance unless they are lasting, since regression to earlier attitudes is likely to be accompanied by greater bitterness and disillusionment than before help arrived. New institutions and organizations initiated or catalyzed by a volunteer are also of little importance if they fade away when he does. The full impact of secondary effects such as improved reading levels or reduced recidivism does not occur until after the volunteer has departed.

The timing of impact measurement is therefore of great importance. VISTA must delay some measurement efforts until well after volunteer departure if the durability of early impact is to be tested and later results are to have opportunity to appear. It is conceivable, but highly unlikely, that a project or individual volunteer with little early impact may nevertheless yield more remote significant results. "Number of persons served" and similar evidence of community response to the volunteer during his stay are usually reasonable outside limits in considering the effects of his work. Where a community organization, for example, grows beyond this universe, the contributions of other factors soon supersede the original VISTA effort in importance. Measurement of impact must then be selective, since end-of-service situations yielding negligible impact clearly do not merit later measurement.

VISTA Volunteers arrive at and depart from a community at various times. This complicates the attribution of changes to VISTA and the timing of their measurement. The VISTA input is often continuous for several years, but the amount varies between years and at different times during a year. Within poverty communities, individual relationships with VISTAs may be continuous, intermittent, or limited to a single exposure of varying duration.

Any VISTA measurement is likely to take place while the poverty community still has volunteers in its midst, since the projects phased out or terminated are usually those in which impact is viewed as little or negative. The duration of results after VISTA departure is critical to appraisal of the long-term impact of the program. The inability to measure it currently requires that present statements about impact be qualified by recognition of possible rapid erosion. Where possible, VISTA should attempt to repeat impact measurements of successful projects when no volunteers remain.

I. The Poverty Community

The feasibility of measuring the impact of VISTA on poverty communities depends on the definition of that universe. If the poverty community is viewed too broadly, VISTA impact will be swamped by variations in the data series caused by the random influence of other variables. City or county-wide figures, for example, are rarely likely to be useful in measuring VISTA impact, because the coincidence of other anti-poverty efforts in similar directions and of far greater magnitudes makes it statistically impossible to attribute any changes to VISTA. The range of variation attributable to chance and to other programs is wider than the degree of variability that would reflect almost any favorable VISTA impact conceivable under present programming practices.

In Norfolk, Virginia, (population over 300,000) for example, 19 VISTA Volunteers are shown, in a VISTA Activities Survey, to be working with, or affecting, 4,500 people. Their activities and likely effects vary widely. The concentration of volunteers and the generality of program goals are representative of current VISTA projects. Their sponsor CAP agency with a budget of $2,600,000 (exclusive of CEP), has more than 75 employees, and Norfolk has a fair share of other organizations and public agencies working in VISTA-like activities. The VISTA input for Norfolk, even if dramatically productive, can be measured only by isolating the 4,500 people affected, or perhaps, a limited geographical area in which that entire group is a major part of the population. Otherwise, statistical tests of reliability are not subtle enough to tell whether an increase in city-wide or poverty area voter registrations and a drop in teenage arrests, for example, are attributable to VISTA, chance variation, or related programs.

Feasibility of measurement is related to (1) size of "community", compared to number of VISTAs and duration of efforts, (2) degree of VISTA concentration on common goals, (3) effectiveness of VISTA activities, and (4) extent of other programs and influences. By narrowing the definition of poverty community, measurement on a community basis is more likely to be feasible. It is no indictment of VISTA that impact on larger communities is measurable only by looking at limited segments of them. The proper comparison is between identifiable benefits to the limited universe of beneficiaries and the costs of the VISTA input that produced them. If VISTA wants to be measurable in a larger universe, increased concentration of input, in numbers and on specific objectives, is a prerequisite.

The choice of definition for poverty community also depends on the availability of data. The City of Norfolk may be too large a community and data base, but "Three blocks in Anacostia" is an example of a poverty community that would yield impact traceable only by a special sampling, since data is not readily available on that basis. Community action agencies with effective internal information systems offer a promising data base for defining poverty communities on a neighborhood basis. Even when volunteers are not assigned directly to a CAA, their sponsors may place them in a neighborhood or other constituency that corresponds closely with a CAA data-gathering unit.

Measuring VISTA impact on a poverty community is feasible only if that community is sufficiently small in relation to the number of volunteers working in it to make it statistically possible to measure the results of their work on other than an individual basis. While other variables affect this figure, the most favorable assumptions regarding similarity of goals among volunteers and extent of other influences still suggest, after examining Activities Surveys, that a ratio of 3,000 people per volunteer is too high to make impact on the community a useful concept, except for superior performers. A smaller ratio does not assure measurable impact, but makes it likely that typical VISTA results can be measured on a community-wide basis. Measurement of impact on individuals within the community may be feasible, even though the sum of these effects cannot be isolated statistically in community data.

Choice of the poverty community is a critical issue in appraising the feasibility of measuring VISTA impact. If the community is that group of poor people with which the volunteers actually work, feasibility is not reduced by the definition. If the community is extended to include the group that was their potential constituency, measurement is more difficult but may still be statistically possible. Extended further, to correspond with broad political boundaries, for example, the community becomes so large that the effects of VISTA influence cannot be separated from those of other variables in considering community-wide figures.

The results of VISTA or any other social program are reflected in the conduct and attitudes of individuals. Impact on "poverty communities" is only a way of describing the possibility that enough individuals are affected to produce significant observable results in a larger universe of which they are part. There may be sound methodological or presentational reasons to vary the size of the universe for measurement purposes but this does not disturb the underlying events being observed or change their significance.

The feasibility of measurement within a particular community depends on the level of impact and the degree of prominence or visibility of its manifestations. The level is related to community responsiveness and the volume and duration of volunteer input. Prominence or visibility reflects the degree of concentration of volunteer work on common goals (or goals subject to like indicators) and the volume of related outside influences operating within the community. The choice of a poverty community for measurement purposes must be determined by review of all these factors. Activities

Surveys and Evaluation Reports can be used for guidance in these choices, since they reflect the considerations mentioned here. The end-of-service questionnaires completed by volunteers, though largely duplicating and corroborating Activities Surveys reports of accomplishments and results, are also useful.

The Activities Surveys support the conclusion that community data is seldom helpful in measuring impact of VISTA on poverty communities. The tremendous variety of activities and results listed usually makes it impossible to predict the likelihood of any change that would be revealed in community figures. The primary focus of measurement efforts must therefore be on what happens, during and after the volunteers' stay, to individuals served by VISTA. If these consequences are of sufficient magnitude, they can be related to a broader community of which the participants are part. To try and trace impact by looking first at the community and then tentatively ascribing significant changes to the influence of VISTA efforts leads back to individual relationships in any case. The starting point of individual encounters reduces problems of attribution and is also more likely to turn up significant impacts. A concentrated VISTA effort addressed to a specific goal, such as increased employment, might permit primary attention to community figures, but few current VISTA projects are amenable to this approach.

Random sampling among individuals identified by volunteers and sponsors as having been served, contacted, or involved by the volunteers, permits a representative statement of impact that may legitimately be extrapolated. This sampling would not be limited to poor people. By including, as appropriate, a sampling from the middle class, from sponsor personnel, and from other groups, the range of likely impacts can be covered.

If sponsors and volunteers fail to include a significant segment of persons actually served or indirectly affected by VISTA, any substantial impact on them will be picked up as community consequences are explored for possible confirmation of individual impacts. Since the "total target population served or involved by VISTAs on this project" is part of the Activities Survey, the possibility of omissions can be reduced by careful questioning. Whether further inquiry is merited, and the directions it should take, depend on the types of accomplishments identified by volunteers and sponsors in the Activities Surveys and end-of-service questionnaires.

The choice of a collection or measurement unit for measuring VISTA impact on poverty communities should be an optimum resulting from balancing of the methodological, presentational and cost considerations noted. Since the data collected should permit summary presentation, the primary question is the size of the poverty community or other unit that can best serve as the building block for the system. With the present thin volunteer concentration and vague goals, any approach to measurement of impact must begin with the constituency of the individual volunteer. In a few cases, the cumulation of results from several constituencies may be sufficiently close to a conventional data-gathering unit to allow recourse to readily-available series.

For example, WAMY, the Community Action Agency for four rural North Carolina counties, was sponsor for 15 VISTA Volunteers during part of 1968. The four counties have 57,000 people, and the volunteers were described in the VISTA Activities Survey as serving 1,285 of them. Volunteer activities included teaching, a health survey, a teen center, library work, and a cooperative store. The volunteers also placed considerable emphasis on their success in improving middle-class participation in anti-poverty efforts. Even assuming that the impact of these diverse activities could be subsumed by a set of common indicators, county-wide data would be of limited value and the four-county information used by the CAA of even less use. Within the neighborhood of the cooperative store, known as Bald Creek,[28] however, it would have been possible to identify a smaller potential constituency, a poverty community, in which the impact of this VISTA effort might be apparent and readily measurable. The impact of VISTA in the four counties is made up of the combined findings in each of several limited universes. Where the province of one or a few volunteers can be identified as a village, for example, collecting data on indicators is simplified.

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[28] The store is described in "The Country Store," VISTA Volunteer, March 1968, p. 3.

II. APPROACHES TO MEASUREMENT

A. The Framework

The conceptual definition of VISTA impact emphasized the importance of separating the effects of VISTA presence or process from intermediate and long-range VISTA program impact. Therefore, the analytical framework must accommodate two distinct areas for measurement: (1) attitude change reflecting the VISTA presence or process, and (2) variables reflecting results of functional program activities beyond the direct outcomes of volunteer encounters.

Agreement on an analytical framework for measuring VISTA programs and volunteers provides a basis for assessing the utility and feasibility of the various approaches discussed later in this chapter.

The VISTA Volunteer is part of a chain of relationships that produce the changes in attitudes and behavior that can be called impact. The causes of social change are varied, often unknown, and generally interrelated. Any contention that VISTA "caused" or "produced" certain results must be carefully explained to avoid charges of exaggeration and to clarify the rationale supporting such a conclusion. In this regard,the causal relationships between VISTA presence and indicators of its consequences are more difficult to grasp than those connecting program activities and impact.

A-1. The Volunteer Constituency

The current VISTA approach to programming rarely results in a concentrated, goal-oriented effort in a well-defined poverty community. Furthermore, the poverty community affected by volunteers is seldom co-terminous with a "community unit," political or otherwise, from which measurement data can be easily drawn. Therefore, measurement methods are likely to be concerned with developing useful and inexpensive techniques for tracing impact on a volunteer constituency basis. The voluneer constituency must be regarded as the poverty community to be measured until new programming methods make alternatives feasible. However, the search for useful impact information about the volunteer constituency is in part an attempt to define the conditions under which the poverty community and a "community unit" can be treated as identical.

Individual and social changes that typically accompany VISTA program activities and presence involve entry of poor people into systems. The public decision-making process and the delivery system for community services arethe major areas affected. Where poor people have, prior to VISTA, had no continuing involvement with these systems and volunteers bring it about, VISTA may reasonably credit the program with some of the consequences of involvement. The volunteers are a link without which the benefits would not have occurred. The impact of VISTA will vary with the effectiveness of public services and this may suggest possible trade-offs among referral activities, community organization directed to improving services, and demonstration service activities by VISTAs.

A-2. The Causal Link

The link concept permits breaking off attribution to VISTA at any point. For example, if a volunteer working with a family assists a member to enter a job training program, the fact of entry is attributable to VISTA. The VISTA efforts may have been special, a particularly difficult situation, or the referral may have involved only the channeling of a routine inquiry. An act of judgment is required to decide whether motivation by the VISTA was significant in bringing about the attitudinal or behavioral change. The attribution of impact can (1) include what happens to the participant in and after the program, (2) be limited to the fact of involvement as a reflection of attitude change, or (3) for routine referrals, be recorded only in "number of referrals."

The extent of tracing and attribution will depend on information about changes in relevant variables obtained from volunteers, sponsors, independent investigators, and members of the VISTA constituency. As more remote consequences are considered, the possibilities of contributing or intervening causes increase. Investigators will have to be guided by a set of consistent and explicit ground rules, but VISTA impact is amenable to this type of tracing process and indicators can be chosen partly on the basis of visibility and ease of observation. Since data collection can be based on sampling, effects of exaggeration or false modesty of volunteers will be reduced by compensating changes in average impact on individuals.

Tabulation of behavior changes yields a statement of gross impact. If, in any group of those served by VISTA, a significant percentage of people demonstrate marked behavior changes there is a strong likelihood that attitudes have changed as well. The hypothesis is that behavioral changes resulting from VISTA efforts are the best available measure of attitude changes, when VISTA is the one consistent new factor among influences to which the populations served are subject.

Attempts to measure VISTA presence and program impacts by tracing of consequences within volunteer constituencies must begin with VISTA Activities Surveys or a similar inquiry. By identifying direct outcomes and volunteer constituencies, the Survey establishes the base on which further measurement efforts can be built. As VISTA is able to establish patterns of relationships between evaluation scores and Activities Survey results, the evaluations may also be helpful in selecting appropriate projects for measurement.

Because an investigator is unlikely to find readily available data that confirm VISTA impact, all measurement efforts are inextricably linked to the VISTA Volunteers. The responses of sponsor representatives in Activities Surveys suggest that most sponsors are not well informed about the specifics of VISTA contributions, especially those related primarily to volunteer presence. Despite the disadvantages of target groups interviews, most VISTA measurement efforts must rely heavily on them, or on information about target group behavior obtained from volunteers. Since one volunteer can report about several individuals or families, effective volunteer reporting has obvious cost advantages over client interviews. Our field investigations were particularly concerned with developing realistic approaches to the involvement of the VISTAs in useful measurement efforts.

Appraising the scientific validity of measurement efforts is subordinate to establishing that there is any significant VISTA impact to measure and validate. Though this may seem obvious, it affects the sequence of efforts in establishing the feasibility of measurement and the conclusions from these efforts. While VISTA impact may be masked by the influences of other variables ("Things would have been even worse had we not been there.") the VISTA context makes this unacceptable as an hypothesis meriting validation efforts. Identifying and quantifying some type of possible impact are the first steps. Only then need VISTA be concerned to establish that (1) the result differs significantly from what happened in comparable poverty communities without VISTA; and (2) the result would not have occurred in the VISTA communities in VISTA's absence.

A-3. Selecting Indicators

The Activities Surveys not only identify the volunteer constituency but provide the first evidence that VISTA projects or individual volunteers are having an impact. The specific results listed for one or more volunteers, the number of results mentioned for a particular category of activity, or the number of volunteers in a common activity, are perhaps the most useful guides that can be devised for selecting additional measures to be examined in more detail. The problem is to classify the types and magnitudes of results that can be considered as measurable impact or are most likely to be indicative of it. This can be done partly on an analytical or a priori basis but an inductive approach is also promising. If, in fact, measurable results accompany particular activity patterns with reasonable frequency, some inroads on the measurement problem can be made. More important, perhaps, is the elimination of those patterns that demonstrably do not yield measurable impact.

Other considerations should be noted in identifying and applying new measures of intermediate program impact and indicators of attitude change resulting from the VISTA presence. While the use of more objective indicators of attitude change, induced from volunteer observations, seems preferable to the highly reactive interviewing of target subjects, it is still a long way from the reliability possible through use of public data generated independently for other purposes. Since independent data are often unavailable or not helpful, increased reliability in recording behavioral indicators is important. Accuracy is improved substantially by avoiding attempts to report gradations of behavioral change and limiting inquiry to gross changes that are readily verifiable by "yes" or "no" answers.

Because the indicators that will be developed are intended to measure the status of a process of attitude change at a particular time, absolute magnitudes are less important than the happening of a particular event. For example, attendance at a meeting in each of three preceding months is as useful as information on the total number of meetings attended. Knowing that a person has participated as a volunteer more than once does not require careful calculation of the exact number of man-days expended. These considerations simplify the form of inquiry and may reduce volunteer and target group concern about responding.

This point is also important conceptually to the theory of measuring VISTA impact. Absolute variations in the indicators selected to measure attitude changes cannot be attributed to VISTA, since many other factors may be involved. Nevertheless, a high consistency of direction in movement of these indicators, associated with VISTA presence, may support a conclusion that VISTA had an impact on the attitudes underlying all of them. It is easier to sustain a contention that the occurrence or non-occurrence of a particular type or level of behavior is an indicator of attitude change than to evolve a scale in which the extent of the changed behavior is related to the extent of attitude change.

A-4. Finding a Comparison Group

All approaches to measuring VISTA impact are plagued by the problem of attribution and the difficulties of creating situations in which controlled conditions can facilitate measurement. The classic experimental design consists of an experimental and a control group tested before and after the event. The non-experimental group acts as a control against change which would have occurred due to forces other than those whose impact is being studied. A refinement of this includes a second pair of groups, one experimental and one not, studied only after the event. These two groups act as controls on reactivity to testing. The operational problems with studies involving control groups include: 1) the difficulty of matching groups on relevant criteria--which are relevant may not be sufficiently understood, even after the test; 2) the moral question of arbitrarily withholding social service program assistance from groups which need it; 3) doing studies at two points in time which assumes a fairly stable population that can be easily located for the follow-up study. Mobility is often very high in urban poverty communities, and tracing is difficult when respondents are likely to be sporadically employed, without a telephone, living with relatives, or afraid of inquiries about people because they might come from the police or bill collectors. The near-doubling of costs involved in control group comparisons, and the resistance of VISTA Volunteers to "testing" in poverty communities, are additional drawbacks. The use of variance analysis or multiple regressions to separate out VISTA contributions, when other influences are at work, is too sophisticated for the type and volume of data available and is also very costly.

Except in isolated cases, or by tailoring programming to the demands of research, useful bases for the comparisons that support findings of impact are best evolved by starting them from the group identified as having been served by or involved with volunteers; the volunteer constituency. The continuous presence of the volunteer among his constituents makes unnecessary successive sampling within the experimental group, as proposed by some writers,[29] to offset the influence of non-controllable environmental factors.

Comparing a community where VISTAs are working with one in which they are not would also be hampered by the likelihood that any VISTA impact will not be visible enough to be revealed in community figures. Within a community, comparison of data before and after VISTA presence will reflect various influences in addition to volunteer efforts. The easiest and most promising comparison for identifying impact is between the actual constituency of the VISTA and his potential constituency, the surrounding neighborhood or community.

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[29] Matthew B. Miles, Learning to Work in Groups, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1967; S. M. Miller in Community Council of Greater New York, Issues in Community Action Research, New York 1967, pp. 67-68.

Although VISTA impact is unlikely to be distillable from community-wide figures, these figures are useful as comparison data against which progress of the VISTA constituency can be compared. The people volunteers work with may differ from the rest of their neighborhood or community. There are no ready generalizations about their representativeness. VISTA impact reflects what happens to them. If they "progress" faster than their neighbors, part of the change may be due to their increased readiness. Regardless of their receptivity to VISTA efforts, part of that progress may be "caused" by VISTA. Since everybody in the neighborhood or community has nearly equal access to new programs or is equally damaged, for example, by deteriorating economic conditions, holding environmental factors constant for the VISTA clientele and the rest of the community is simpler than trying to develop comparable control communities. With respect to personal characteristics, the two groups will sometimes be similar. Where they differ significantly, the attribution of impact to VISTA is still permissible. Scientific accuracy requires explicit statement of the differences, since this bears on the significance of the impact, but does not bar appropriately limited claims of VISTA accomplishments.

Comparison of personal characteristics and changes in measured variables between the VISTA constituency and the rest of the neighborhood or community can sharpen appraisal of the VISTA contribution. The differences in rate of change between elements of the two sets of figures are a more accurate statement of VISTA's effects than findings reflecting change in the volunteer constituency alone.

If personal characteristics are not significantly different, the situation approximates a controlled experiment. Even if the VISTA participants are not representative of their immediate community, the impact on them is still attributable to VISTA. The magnitude of that impact may be the result of the differences identified and, if finances permit, data may be further analyzed to determine the personal characteristics that make particular groups most likely to benefit from VISTA.

Community figures will usually include data relating to the VISTA participants for whom separate data is collected. The data separately determined can be viewed as the impact of VISTA on the poverty community. When subtracted from community figures and compared with the remainder, comparative rates of change can be determined.

These considerations of research designs and methods most suitable for analyzing VISTA impact apply to all substantive measurement approaches. Those likely to be less rewarding on the basis of practicality and cost can be rejected regardless of the content of measurement efforts.

B. Four Approaches

The four approaches to operational specification of the analytical framework are:

1) Observing the results of behavior changes among target populations, independent of attitudes reflected;
2) Examining changes in behavior identified as indicators of attitude changes;
3) Studying the attitudes of target populations by interviewing and testing (including sponsor staff and non-poor members of the community, as appropriate); and
4) Recording significant anecdotal meterial and quantifying aspects of it where possible.

For each of these approaches, a set of alternative techniques is available, varying in collection methods, respondents, data sources, timing, and analytic sophistication. Alternatives also differ in cost, confidence, timeliness, and risk. Systematic review of the costs and benefits for available options allows more enlightened choice of measurement methods.

B-1. Changes in Behavior

The first approach is followed in the Activities Survey now used. This is a vital first link in the measurement process, basic to all approaches and indispensable while present programming practices continue. In some cases, behavioral changes, independent of the attitudes underlying them, can be significant and readily summarizable measures of VISTA impact.

For example, if a group of volunteers were working to reduce the number of early school leavers in a school district, regularly available data on that district might tell a great deal about VISTA impact. If school drop-out rates were reduced significantly, VISTA impact might be clearly identified and measured, without additional reference to any attitude changes implied by the result. Unfortunately for evaluators of the program, VISTA projects are not so neatly packaged. The first problem of this approach to VISTA measurement is to identify project results reflecting sufficiently uniform goal direction to be tabulable.

The more direct impacts of program activities, manifested by changes in behavior, can be explored by first identifying those projects or individuals likely to produce them in significant amounts. Activities Surveys and Evaluations are both useful for this purpose. A project that scores well in evaluation but reports few substantial direct outcomes may nevertheless merit further attention, since the Activities Survey may reflect a prior decision to concentrate on fewer people and seek more consequential impact. The "number of persons served" criterion must be applied carefully, to avoid an unfortunate inference that it is of critical importance in appraising accomplishment. The numbers and types of direct outcomes identified are a guide to further measurement efforts, but other available information about project performance is also relevant.

Measuring additional consequences of direct program outcomes to amplify Activities Surveys does not require controlled conditions. It is not an experiment or an attempt to compare VISTA with another program, but an effort to tabulate the effects attached to the direct program encounters between volunteers and community residents. A routine follow-up information reporting system, similar to the contact records of a good CAA, could readily yield the necessary findings. In its absence, measurement is dependent upon responses of participants, either directly or through the volunteers.

The list below is not intended to be definitive. Volunteers, for example, may be able to identify additional consequences or may, by defining activities more specifically, cause items on a list to be rejected. Library use, for example, will be a direct objective of some education activities and unrelated to others. A consumer education class activity may suggest additional behaviors for both education and economic results that should be measured. The list identifies typical patterns that are useful for presenting impact on a poverty community, in lieu of arraying the entire range of effects that volunteers may identify. These patterns can also be used to record results of unprogrammed activities, such as tutoring efforts by a VISTA lawyer or a cooperative store developed through efforts of community organization volunteers.

Starting with a volunteer constituency for which VISTA activities emphasize economic, employment-related, or housing and neighborhood improvement, outcomes, measurement of intermediate impact should include information about the following:

1. How many people left public assistance?
2. How many left the community?
3. Gross sales of cooperatives and other enterprises?
4. How many now own homes?
5. How many who found jobs are still working?
6. How many are less delinquent on loans or rent?
7. How many have paid a doctor or druggist for the first time?
8. By how much have food or clothing costs been reduced (e.g., through consumer education or cooperatives)?
9. Identify increases in Federal or local government funds appropriated, if any.
10. How many families have newly acquired light or water facilities?
11. How much more in taxes is the group paying?
12. How many have made discernible improvements in residence?

These measures are intentionally broad and generally concerned with numbers of people manifesting certain behavior rather than with the extent of that behavior. A job program, for example, would normally be concerned with more precise information about types and duration of employment, number of interviews per placement, and similar matters. VISTA program activities are rarely concentrated enough to merit this level of measurement attention. When they are, volunteers are sometimes reluctant to maintain the records required to yield necessary information. VISTA purposes are often better served by sacrificing completeness in order to improve cooperation and accuracy.

In health, there are fewer measures of intermediate impact. The results of health surveys and clinical assistance, for example, are usually well covered by Activities Surveys. A tentative group of queries that might illuminate direct outcomes of some health activities includes:

1. How many people served by volunteers in health classes or in health centers have changed some behavior (e.g., eating differently, immunizations)?
2. Are there any observable reductions in school or job absences among groups served by health activities?
3. What is the rate of adoption of birth control techniques and (long-term) the birth rate among families counseled on family planning?
4. In how many cases have baby weights or infant sickness been demonstrably affected by volunteer efforts?
5. How many families saw a doctor for the first time?

It is no condemnation of what might be called VISTA "comforting" activities to point out that the consequences of much hospital work are not readily measurable. The number of people made happier or more comfortable, for example, is important. The fact that the extent of that improvement cannot be quantified does not mean that the activity should be discarded. Furthermore, the contribution of such activities to changing attitudes is reflected in indicators measuring the effect of VISTA presence.

VISTA education and recreation activities have intermediate effects that can also be measured by follow-up studies of the groups participating. It is difficult to judge, a priori, which projects merit further study, but Activities Surveys should be helpful in identifying primary direct outcomes that suggest promising further results. Although Headstart and Upward Bound type programs, for example, offer quite different outlets for VISTA activities, the principle of measurement in both cases involves determination of changes related to education inputs identified in Activities Surveys. If VISTAs work with Headstart children, and these children pass from kindergarten to first grade at a rate that indicates a Headstart impact, the results of VISTA efforts should be recorded as impact. Any effectiveness comparisons between VISTA workers and others are secondary to identifying this impact. The variables that may usefully be explored in amplifying the results of VISTA education and recreation include:

1. Changes in achievement levels as measured by tests.
2. Numbers promoted to next grade.
3. Truancy, delinquency, and dropout incidence.

4. Use of libraries as measured by issuance of cards, and, as appropriate, by circulation.
5. Continued participation in recreation activities after conclusion of VISTA-assisted program.
6. Number of adult volunteers participating in education or recreation programs.

Because the number of volunteers in a project or individually performing similar activities may be small, it is difficult to generalize about specific measures that may be appropriate. The broad measures suggested here are useful for aggregating findings. Exploring impact on a volunteer constituency will often require development of additional criteria through discussion with volunteers.

The measurement of VISTA impact may be viewed as a series of screenings in which projects that continue to appear impressive are subjected to successive analytical probes. As long as VISTA is aware of the limitations of each probe, this approach can be helpful in keeping costs down. The impact measures required to sustain credibility with Congress, for example, differ from those necessary to impress the scientific community, and the graduated approach can assure effective and appropriate response to each need.

The remaining program category, legal services, can be measured in part by summarizing client outcomes. The following variables may be relevant:

1. How many evictions were avoided by assistance of VISTA lawyers working with tenant groups or individuals?
2. How many housing violations have been corrected as a result of VISTA lawyers' efforts?
3. How many premises have been improved, repaired or painted (independent of violation corrections) after negotiations by VISTA lawyers on behalf of tenant groups?
4. In how many cases has negotiation by VISTA lawyers on behalf of consumer groups resulted in adjustment of grievances? Translate the adjustments into dollar savings, jobs made available, etc., if possible.
5. What is the number and dollar volume of program grants made to groups counseled by volunteers?

These measures do not begin to describe the impact that a legal services program can someday have on the wider poverty community. The eventual tabulation of results may include exploration of community-wide figures on retail prices, rents, complaints to consumer protection agencies, crime, and other items.

It is futile, at this point, to think in these terms until the concentration and duration of VISTA efforts is sufficient to make such impact likely. The variables suggested here are intermediate indicators of future impact, in addition to being current measures of the results of short-run services.

The functional program service activities examined produce useful and important results. These results are independent of the relative effectiveness of VISTAs in comparison with other forms of assistance. They can also be measured independently of what happened to the participants in earlier years. The measurement of VISTA program impact demonstrates that a number of people received services changing their status or behavior to a degree that can be quantified.

B-2. Behavioral Changes Reflecting Attitudes

The VISTA presence and more remote program impact, the changes in attitudes and habits that may permit VISTA to claim credit for bringing people out of poverty, can be measured only indirectly. These impacts are presently subject to the same considerations regarding concentration and duration as direct program impacts. Although attribution and causal connection can only be established for the indirect impacts by comparisons, the measurement of gross changes in attitudes and behavior is an indispensable initial step. If no changes are manifested, the need for comparison disappears.

The best judges of appropriate indicators of attitude changes are the VISTA Volunteers. They have implicit expectations about the behavioral consequences of their efforts and our field investigations suggest that, with sensitive dialogue, these can become explicit. Although attitude change may precede effects on conduct, and the brief period of VISTA service is too short to expect major permanent results without reinforcement, behavioral indicators are useful evidence of movement in desired directions. They are as reliable as well-meaning statements of attitude or inferences from tests. Measurement by indicator changes can be used independently or to corroborate the more subjective measures of attitude.

Indicators can be tested in consultation with volunteers. Their agreement that a particular behavior is some evidence of the attitudes they have been trying to influence adds to the validity of using it as an indicator. When they disagree or suggest other indications, the behavior may still be worth exploring, but the relation to attitudes and VISTA efforts may need clarification. In future projects, VISTA can define in advance the indicators by which they propose to measure success or impact. Since this has not been done in the past, any indicators suggested currently must flow from volunteer perceptions of their work. The Activities Surveys, other VISTA materials, and field interviews with volunteers, have all been drawn on in preparing the lists that follow.

For individuals and families whose involvement with VISTA has not been primarily in community organization, VISTA _presence_ produces a variety of direct improvements that are difficult to tabulate or to construe as impact on the poverty community. The words of Tony Gomes, a VISTA who worked with migrants, in the February 1968 issue of _The VISTA Volunteer_, illustrate this type of help:

> If nothing else, these 60 Mexican-American workers know that there is one "Anglo" who does not mind living with them; if nothing else, some improved their ability to communicate in our language; if nothing else, some are capable of signing their own checks for the first time; if nothing else, some

> can now examine the change given by a store clerk and figure out if it's right; if nothing else, 98 percent of the crew knows it does not suffer from tuberculosis (the remaining 2 percent were not tested); if nothing else, most were taught why money is withheld for social security; if nothing else, most have sent for their birth certificates; if nothing else, the crew leader is licensed. (p. 13)

This is the presence impact that can be measured by asking the workers questions, giving them tests, or looking at some aspects of their behavior as both tangible impact and as indications of attitude change. The tangible changes are so diverse that they defy tabulation, but the measurement of attitude changes is a useful alternative for describing effects. While Tony's influence on other types of conduct may not be directly traceable, indicators that reflect the same attitudes implicit in the actions he describes can be developed. If for example, the presence of an "Anglo" among them affected their view of the world, many other aspects of the worker's behavior may have been influenced. Experience may permit refinement and increase the general applicability of a group of indicators chosen from behaviors such as these:

1. Application for a public program or a community service with VISTA assistance.
2. Application for a public program or a community service without VISTA assistance.
3. Application for a job through ads, agencies, or inquiry at employers.
4. Holding a job continuously for a stated period of time.

5. Remaining free of arrest or other negative police contact for a stated period.
6. Family members entering adult education, or other classes, or returning to school.
7. Family members enrolled in school continuing to attend until high school graduation.
8. Family members in high school entering college.
9. Either parent visiting child's school for other than disciplinary reasons.
10. Improvements of family residence.
11. Remaining in family residence.
12. Improving debt status.
13. Reading a book, magazine, or newspaper (subscribing, or obtaining a library card).
14. Attending cultural enrichment activities without volunteer.
15. Traveling (e.g., to next county) without volunteer.

To the volunteer who complains that this and other lists do not accurately reflect the attitude changes occurring, those measuring can reasonably inquire for additional criteria. The search for indicators should be a continuing effort, since so little is known about the dynamics of evolution from poverty to more prosperous status.

Where volunteers are assigned to community organization activities or work informally at them when not performing assigned tasks, their intangible accomplishments are likely to be manifested in other ways. Participation in a community organization reflects more confident attitudes about self and control over environment, but the behavioral responses are more social than individual. The list of indicators is intended to augment the conventional "number of meetings" and "number of participants attending" figures that the OEO Management Information System and the VISTA Activities Survey produce. The concern for types of behavior instead of extent of it (e.g., "Has he volunteered?" not "How many man-days did he give?") is intended to facilitate collection of current and pre-VISTA information and to emphasize that the primary measurement concern is for the underlying attitudes that are related to the behavior. The list of indicators includes:

1. Membership in a community organization or other group.
2. Attendance at a specified number of meetings of an organization or about an issue.
3. Participation in election of officers.
4. Signing a petition.
5. Voluntary participation in cooperative efforts, including political and others.
6. Dues or financial contribution to a community or informal organization.
7. Reading a newspaper or magazine article, pamphlet, or book, about an organization or issue.
8. Participating in a collective visit or other protest activity.
9. Registration and voting.
10. Visiting an official alone to make an inquiry or express a grievance.

This approach to measurement seeks to isolate an area of impact that is currently reflective of VISTA efforts. Volunteer activities among the poor, in addition to contributing to sponsor goals, presently provide an unmeasured amount of impetus for change. As the poor make increased use of services and become increasingly committed to organization and change, the VISTA role and measures of VISTA impact will also change. The VISTA contribution will inevitably shift to preventing disillusionment and assisting in demonstrating that the attitude changes stimulated do indeed bring about economic and social improvement. In community organization, the effort will shift from organizing to strengthening groups and assisting them with more complex undertakings. The ultimate measure of VISTA impact will then involve looking at the status of participants with a greater concern for tangible gains.

The indicators of changing attitudes have been designed to encourage VISTA Volunteers to support an effort to collect reasonably accurate measurement data. The required information readily lends itself to phrasing of questions like, "Before you knew the volunteer, had you ever ...?" instead of, "How many times have you ...?" An observant and retentive-minded VISTA should be able to supply answers for both pre-VISTA and later status without need for formal interviews among his constituency.

Reliance on the volunteer's close association with the people is helpful in avoiding an unfortunate dependence on target population interviews to determine behavior. The risks of this dependence are shown by a currently reported study in which a group of AFDC mothers were asked about behavior relating to welfare participation, voting, and children's accomplishments in school.[30] The percentage of inaccurate replies varied with each question and with the perceived status of the interviewer, but in some cases exceeded one third of the total. Replies were validated by looking at school, election, and welfare records. The knowledge of VISTA Volunteers and occasional spot checking in official records should enable VISTA to assemble data of more acceptable validity on broad behavioral responses.

If the volunteer is unable to identify any behavioral change in his constituency, this may be a useful criterion for judging that the limited responses of the Activities Survey are an adequate measure of his impact on the persons for whom other changes are not identified. A volunteer may "serve" or be "involved" with hundreds of people and have impact on only a few that goes beyond "number of referrals" or "number of members."

The significance of any finding of volunteer impact on attitudes will be greatly increased if confirmed by similar results of measurement at a later date. Where a group that had been involved with VISTA is left without volunteer help for six months, for example, continued consistent direction of indicators would support a claim of more permanent change.

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[30] "Validity in interviews with AFDC Mothers," (unattributed), Welfare in Review, September-October 1968, pp. 18-19.

Assuming that investigators are able, either directly or through volunteers, to identify positive changes in indicators between VISTA arrival and the date of investigation, they would then proceed to develop additional data to test validity of the hypothesis that the changes are a measure of VISTA impact in the poverty community.

B-3. Attitude Studies

Attitude studies to measure VISTA impact, regardless of cost, involve substantial risks. The significance and reliability of their results is dubious. Target populations among the poor are frequently unwilling to respond or, when they do, are likely to tell the questioner what they think he wants to hear. Lack of familiarity with surveys and survey materials, reactive effects between questioner and respondent, error, and unconscious bias, also cloud the interpretation of efforts to measure attitude change by questioning a sampling of those whose attitudes may have been influenced.

This type of questioning may also jeopardize the relationships among VISTAs and the groups they work with. The most sensitive interviewer is still an intruder. His presence is a reminder to the VISTA and the respondent of the transient quality of the VISTA relationship and an interruption of the personal, non-professional interaction that is typical of it. VISTAs are not likely to be sympathetic to the idea of bringing interviewers around to survey attitudes among "their people."

There has been considerable discussion in academic literature of these and other considerations affecting the use of questionnaires and interviews in measurement of attitudes. For example, Ehrlich and Riesman, in a study of teenage girls conducted for the Girl Scouts of America,[31] found that the personal characteristics of subjects and interviewers seriously affected their data. They wrote that:

> "Our own research on the survey interviewer helps confirm the growing awareness that inner psychological processes, including repression and ambivalence, interact with socially structured and highly visible characteristics, such as social class, ethnicity, age, and sex."[32]

Recognition of these interactions seriously reduces confidence in data summarizing responses.

The apparently more remote, group-administered, anonymous, self-enumerative quesionnaire suffers from the same disadvantages. There is well-documented evidence, for example, that the racial background of the questionnaire administrator affects the responses given when racial issues are the subject.[33] Respondents tend to give more "socially acceptable answers" when one of the investigators is a Negro. The inter-cultural interviewing inevitable in any attempts to measure VISTA impact is especially vulnerable to the risks affecting valid interpretation of interview and test results.

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[31] June Sachar Ehrlich and David Riesman, "Age and Authority in the Interview," Public Opinion Quarterly, Spring 1961, pp. 39-56.

[32] Ibid, p. 40.

[33] K. R. Athey, et al., in "Two Experiments Showing the Effect of the Interviewer's Background on Response to Questionnaires Concerning Racial Issues," Journal of Abnormal Psychology, August 1960, pp. 244-46; Gene F. Summers and Andre F. Hammonds, "Effect of Racial Characteristics of Investigators on Self-Enumerated Responses to a Negro Prejudice Scale," Social Forces, June 1966, pp. 515-18.

The difficulties of using attitude studies are compounded by the need for base line pre-VISTA comparison data. If, for example, attitudes toward self were to be tested, the level of attitudes at the time of volunteer arrival would have to be known before any change could be identified and attributed to VISTA efforts. Determining the initial level by random sampling of attitudes within the community is costly and impractical. Choosing the population to be sampled is particularly difficult, since the groups that will be involved with VISTA often cannot be identified in advance.

Non-reactive measurement methods make collection of useful base-line data easier. Ideally, the level of indicators of improved self-image, for example, could be reviewed during the early period of volunteer service and at conclusion of service without personal interviews that might be considered invasion of privacy. These could be based on community data and, if impact did not appear to be identifiable on that basis, data on the people served by volunteers could be tabulated separately by reference back from their later status. Volunteers, suspecting that members of a target group had improved in attitudes toward self, could readily ascertain their pre-volunteer condition with reference to a limited number of indicators. If participation in informal organizations and use of community services were taken as appropriate indicators, for example, the "before" status of the target group could be found at the time that the "after" result was acknowledged.

Except for occasional use in identifying positive attitudes toward VISTA, and similar single-purpose, non-experimental efforts, attitude surveys are not a feasible option for use in measuring VISTA impact. They are designed to explore in depth changes in specific attitudes under controlled conditions and are not readily adaptable to measuring the generalized non-directive attitude changes effected by VISTA.

B-4. The Anecdotal Approach

None of the measurement approaches outlined can pick up all VISTA impact. Designed to capture effects at a high level of generalization, they necessarily sacrifice detailed description of particular impacts. This defect can be remedied by intensive investigations of high-impact projects or individual volunteer efforts selected from Activities Surveys reports.

The principal criterion for selection of impacts to be measured in greater detail would be the likelihood of impact beyond the constituency of persons served by the volunteers. For example, new programs or services initiated by VISTAs and incorporated into sponsor agency operation may merit special attention. Cases of startling negative impact may warrant further examination. Succesful projects of community organizations assisted by volunteers can also be collected independently.

Descriptive material would supplement quantification of program impact using the conventional categories established for all projects. Other types of impact would be identified and the results would also be useful for identifying new indicators of attitude change.

The findings of these cases studied will sometimes be the major or only identifiable impact of VISTA on a poverty community. VISTA could rely on this method and collect only visible and high-yield impact to the exclusion of other measurement efforts, and the volume of impact recorded might justify the entire program. Any decision to do this should be deferred until attempts to measure the intangible results of VISTA presence have established a basis for comparing the costs and benefits of alternative approaches.

B-5. A Note of Caution

Some perspective on the limitations presently inherent in all approaches to social measurement can be gained by reviewing the ambitious evaluation projects of Cornell University in Peru, the University of Kentucky in Appalachia, and Mobilization for Youth in New York. In these extensive studies, practical and methodological difficulties forced the researchers to settle for findings so qualified as to make it very clear that goals originally proposed were too optimistic.

The Cornell University Report on Measurement of Peace Corps Program Impact in the Peruvian Andes,[34] one of the first attempts at "hard" evaluation of a voluntary service program, illustrates the dangers of attributing tangible impact to a program concerned primarily with general and intangible goals. The Cornell group developed a scale of socio-economic differentiation that measured communities in terms of 100 attributes of Peruvian social and economic structure. Communities having Peace Corps Volunteers were rated on the increase in number of attributes noted during each volunteer's stay and the changes were attributed to the Peace Corps. These communities were compared with "more or less matched"[35] communities without volunteers, for a comparable period. Descriptions of the varied influences at work in the comparison communities revealed the difficulties of creating the controlled conditions of a scientific experiment when the experimental input is expected to affect entire social structures.

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[34] Cornell University, Measurement of Peace Corps Program Impact in the Peruvian Andes, Department of Anthropology, Ithaca, N.Y., 1966.

[35] Ibid, p. 3.

The study's findings of significant impact were questionable because of the comparison problems and a tenuous conceptualization that went from the Peace Corpsman to Andean Indians to "institution building" to a social structure scale with a curious relationship to those institutions. The report includes anecdotal materials showing the same diversity of activities that characterizes VISTA and it is clear that the weight of achievements claimed rests on far too light a foundation. Had the changes in social structure been treated as possible indicators of community attitudes, a more persuasive analysis of impact could have been made. Attempts in the report to trace and tabulate improvements in agricultural practices and similar direct program impacts of volunteer work are less subject to the charge of over attribution.

The University of Kentucky recently completed a study of the $2.84 million Community Action Program (CAP) in Knox County, Kentucky.[36] The three-year study (1965-68) proposed to look at the net impact of the CAP program in moving communities toward "greater modernity in life styles." Both University staff and local residents were employed to gather data.

The research design included use of a neighboring county, which had no CAP, as a comparison group. However, the only work there involved reviewing publicly available data, and little reference is made in the detailed studies to the situation in that county, whose similarity to Knox County was neverly clearly established. Data were gathered through surveys, written questionnaires, and interviews, as long as two years apart.

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[36] University of Kentucky, Community Action in Appalachia, Lexington, Kentucky, 1968.

The result of this laborious effort was a thirteen-volume document concluding that probably some "movement toward greater modernity in life styles" did take place. It was not possible to attribute what, if any, portion was due to the impact of the CAP, beyond noting that change was more likely to be found among certain groups living closer to CAP centers than among others in the poverty communities.

The University of Kentucky study attempted to make use of behavioral indicators and the findings suggested that: 1) Number of people who attend community meeting is likely to be a biased indicator of impact, since attendance figures tend to be higher than usual whenever immediate benefits, such as jobs, participation in recreation programs, or free material, will accrue to those attending; 2) A limitation on assumptions about the significance of people on dependency rolls (welfare and others) is suggested by reports of the non-participating poor's strict cultural interpretation of self-help, which limits the use they will make of government relief programs. In other words, in some instances it may be reflective of a movement toward modernity if the number on government dependency rolls increases.[37] This emphasizes the importance of continuing refinement and careful interpretation of behavioral indicators.

Mobilization for Youth is making efforts to measure the overall impact of this program in a selected neighborhood over a given period of time. The problems noted in a discussion of MFY's approach to its self-study[38] could serve as a catalogue of the difficulties inherent in any attempt to use measurement of VISTA impact for inter-program comparisons. They included:

(1) The program (MFY) is not integrated or unified, but is a "polyglot" of programs gathered together under one name, often with internally inconsistent objectives.

(2) The program itself does not stand still but evolves with changes in funding and personnel.

(3) Each program studied is unique and general conclusions are probably not possible.

(4) There are too many dramatic forces at work in a slum neighborhood over time, including the geographical movement involved in urban renewals.

(5) Identifying the objectives of a specific program concretely enough to establish indices of progress is difficult.

(6) Impact takes a long time to occur and accurate interim indicators are difficult to identify.

(7) Certain behavior in one time period does not necessarily forecast behavior in a future time period.

(8) Negative movement of traditional behavioral indicators in some cases can result from a program's success, because frustration levels have been raised in the process of affecting attitudes.

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[37] Stephen R. Cain, "A Selective Description of a Knox County Mountain Neighborhood," Unit 3 of the University of Kentucky study,p.71.

[38] Community Council of Greater New York, Issues in Community Action Programs, CCGNY, New York 1967, pp. 31 ff.

Most of these problems relate to the external validity of measurement, the possibilities of generalizing about a program concept from individual studies of impact. This must be carefully distinguished from the far easier task of quantifying results of specific program efforts to identify total impact more effectively. The present state of VISTA programming makes testing of the VISTA concept by seeking to measure impact a highly dubious undertaking. The concluding section offers a blueprint for some practical efforts at measuring gross results and suggests some techniques for improving the feasibility of a more sophisticated attempt to evaluate the VISTA concept.

III. MEASUREMENT PROPOSALS

A. Practical Problems of Impact Measurement

1. Respondent Attitudes

The attitudes of volunteers are of critical importance in developing practical methods for measuring VISTA impact on poverty communities. The individual volunteer usually associates impact measurement with an attempt to quantify his efforts and regards it as intrusive and not relevant. The volunteer's attitude often is that he is "doing his thing," this is good in itself, and there is no need to question further.

The same sentiments that prompt a young person to join VISTA influence his attitudes toward the measurement of social change. Most of the volunteers that we encountered in the Mid-Atlantic Region exhibited a remarkable enthusiasm for helping the target groups with which they are working. After a few months of exposure, however, in some communities many begin to view poverty problems as resulting from a strong tradition of racial suppression and economic exploitation. Indeed, many volunteers came to doubt not only the effectiveness but also the sincerity of local political powers in alleviating poverty conditions.

This anti-establishment feeling was observed to extend beyond local power levels and to limit volunteer identification with both their sponsoring organizations and with OEO. Hence, any survey form of measuring impact that involves volunteers as respondents runs a high risk of bias from:

1. Prejudices toward survey sponsor
2. Lack of empathy between an interviewer and the volunteers
3. No response or misleading responses from the volunteers

Our experience with volunteers, however, suggests that they become more amenable to effectiveness measurements when shown that impact indicators can be useful tools in their own efforts. Attempts to educate volunteers to the value of performance monitoring should begin during their training phase, before they have had any prolonged exposure to their difficult, frustrating, and often hostile working environments.

After they have accepted the interviewer, volunteers are prone to be very candid about their activities, successes, and failures. Thus, more reliable information on VISTA presence or VISTA contributions in community organization and individual assistance can be better obtained through meeting with volunteers, than through a system of impersonal reporting or individual interviews.

Responses obtained from sample target group families also run a high risk of producing unreliable data. Poverty families in the Mid-Atlantic Region tend not to be frank and open with outsiders. Questions about their well-being typically are answered with a guarded and evasive "We are doing just fine." In fact, the VISTAs often require as much as several months of work in a community to gain the confidence of individual families. These attitudes of target groups make it highly unlikely that any outside surveyor will get reliable data on VISTA impact. Data could be gathered, but respondents would probably be telling the interviewer what they think he wants to hear.

Attitudes of the non-poor in a community toward the poor and any local programs aimed at alleviating poverty also affect the feasibility of measuring VISTA impact. This is particularly true in rural areas where the entire community is conscious of and sensitive to VISTA presence. It is not uncommon for VISTA presence and community organization efforts to result in increased awareness of alternatives and political action by target groups. This sometimes leads the community to become vocal about the undesirability of VISTA presence. "How can they be effective when they disregard the traditions and values of the community?" has been the response of some communities to VISTA. In more extreme cases, the community may label the volunteers as troublemakers, immoral hippies, or communists. Increased law enforcement emphasis directed at protesting target groups may result in more arrests.

These situations are not uncommon, and at first may suggest that VISTA impact is negative. However, such community attitudes can be indicative of a positive VISTA impact, if the community has, for example, been characterized by a tradition of racial discrimination, economic exploitation of tenant farmers, and a large number of families just above the "poverty line" who are not directly benefiting from poverty programs. Development of indicators reflecting changed attitudes among these groups must be on an individual community basis and findings will often be ambiguous.

In these and other communities, the availability, form, and credibility of public data and statistics on poverty conditions also can be misleading. We have found that the extent and severity of poverty is publicly minimized in many southern rural communities, particularly among those anxious to present the best possible image in attempting to revitalize their economic life. As a result, measuring the impact of VISTA by using available public data on indicators of change should be done with much caution.

2. The Attribution Problem

The makeup of target communities, the character of VISTA activities, and the number of non-VISTA efforts directed at alleviating poverty conditions, make it difficult to attribute changes directly to VISTA. This emphasizes the need for using control or comparison groups. Individual target areas, however, tend to have distinctive mixes of social, economic, and health conditions. Their histories, physical environments, and expectations about the future, for example, are also different. This makes the selection of control groups with sufficiently similar characteristics extremely difficult. Choosing control groups at random may even aggravate the situation, since the universe of poverty groups is far from homogeneous.

In some instances, in both rural and urban tracks, if the target group is made sufficiently small, the homogeneity problem can be partially overcome by using the surrounding community as a control. A problem arises when influences from within the target group radiate outward and influence the comparison group. In an urban environment, for example, the VISTAs might be influencing those who are considered to be the informal leaders in the entire target community. If the influence of the informal leaders extends beyond the arbitrary dimensions of the volunteers' constituency, use of the surrounding community as a control could cause apparent VISTA impact on target group to be reduced.

Possibly the least objectionable approach to isolating VISTA impact in a target community is to use the condition of that community before the introduction of VISTAs as a control. The reliability of this approach would be reduced if noticeable change had recently taken place in the target community. However, in many cases, particularly in rural communities, there has been a marked absence of change. In these cases the "before and after" approach to control groups would be appropriate.

B. Measuring Current Projects

After considering various approaches to measuring VISTA impact, the lessons learned from past attempts to measure social change, and the practical difficulties inherent in VISTA environments, it must be concluded that the feasibility of measuring VISTA impact on poverty communities is very limited. While any method purporting to yield precise measurements is likely to be misleading, identification of types of changes brought about by VISTA and measurement of their relative incidence is possible. In other words, while valid precise measures are not feasible, indicators can be observed that will help significantly in making better program decisions and policies.

It is feasible to make hypotheses about anticipated VISTA impact and to test them according to established statistical rules. This type of approach minimizes dependence on questionable public data and avoids the biases inherent in using poverty families as respondents. In the absence of any current specific VISTA objectives or statements about prospective VISTA impact, it is necessary to formulate hypotheses based on behavioral measures and indicators of attitude change. The indicators chosen for a given project depend on the conditions of the target community and the observed activities of the VISTAs. The directions of movement in indicators that are considered to be positive and desirable manifestations of impact can then be established. However, for current projects such indicators will not measure the extent of impact with any precision, nor will they alone reveal much about the relative value of alternative VISTA activities.

Impact indicators can be monitored by determining, after first examining the Activities Survey of a VISTA group, the variables likely to be useful as measures or indicators of impact. Next, an hypothesis should be asserted that if a certain number of the chosen indicators has shown a positive movement, a stated level of impact exists. For each indicator, the level of behavior in the VISTA constituency constituting an acceptable movement must be defined. For example, the drop-out rate among students with whom VISTAs worked must be 50 percent less than what has been normal for the target community.

The preceding approach can be translated into a measurement methodology based on statistical sampling techniques. First, a judgment must be made as to the percentage of people in the VISTA constituency whose behavior has changed according to each indicator. If, for example, between 70 and 90 percent of the group population are hypothesized to have taken advantage of a community service for the first time on their own, a random sample can be tested to see if the hypothesis is true for between 70 and 90 percent of the sample. The size of the sample will depend not only on the 70 and 90 percent assumption used in the hypothesis, but also on the acceptable risks allowed that (1) a correct hypothesis is rejected when inferences are made from the sample data to the total population, and (2) an incorrect hypothesis is accepted. If it was judged in the previous hypothesis that a ten percent chance of rejecting a correct hypothesis and a ten percent chance of accepting an erroneous hypothesis were acceptable, the size of the required sample would be 38. Reducing these two types of risk from 10 percent to 5 percent would increase the required sample from 38 to approximately 74. The sample sizes can be calculated according to the following generalization:

$$n \doteq \left(\frac{Z_a \sqrt{\pi_o (1.00 - \pi_o)} + Z_\beta \sqrt{\pi_a (1.00 - \pi_a)}}{\pi_o - \pi_a} \right)^2$$

where

n = sample size

Z_a = a normalized expression of the probability that a correct hypothesis will be accepted

Z_β = a normalized expression of the probability that an incorrect hypothesis will be rejected

π_o = the mean percentage assumed in the hypothesis (e.g., the percentage of the constituency expected to achieve the stated level of impact)

π_a = acceptable deviation from the mean percentage assumed in the hypothesis.

The above sample refers to the target group constituency with which a selected VISTA group is working, but surveying target group members directly is unreliable and inadvisable. The information, therefore, should come from interviews with volunteers. The volunteers can be selected by first identifying the people with whom volunteers in the group have been working. Assume that 450 people can be clearly identified by name as the total constituency of the VISTA group. If the acceptable risks associated with testing the hypothesis call for a sample size of 38, a random sample of this many names can be selected from the constituency population. The individual volunteers working with each name could then be determined. The interviewer would then question these VISTAs with respect to the behavior indicators for each family or individual of the sample constituency.

The preceding methodology would measure whether VISTA was achieving a certain level of impact, based on a judgment of the extent of behavioral changes constituting that level. The impact, or lack of it, suggested by the preceding measures could be further tested for attribution to the VISTA group by using the community surrounding the VISTA target area as a control. If the surrounding area had basically the same social, cultural, and economic characteristics as the target group, the same methodology, using the same hypotheses and indicators, would be replicated in the surrounding community. The need to interview a sample of poor people in the surrounding community might bias results, since volunteers furnished the information on their constituency. Where possible, it would be preferable to get information on the comparison group from schools and other public agencies that might be cognizant of changes in behavior.

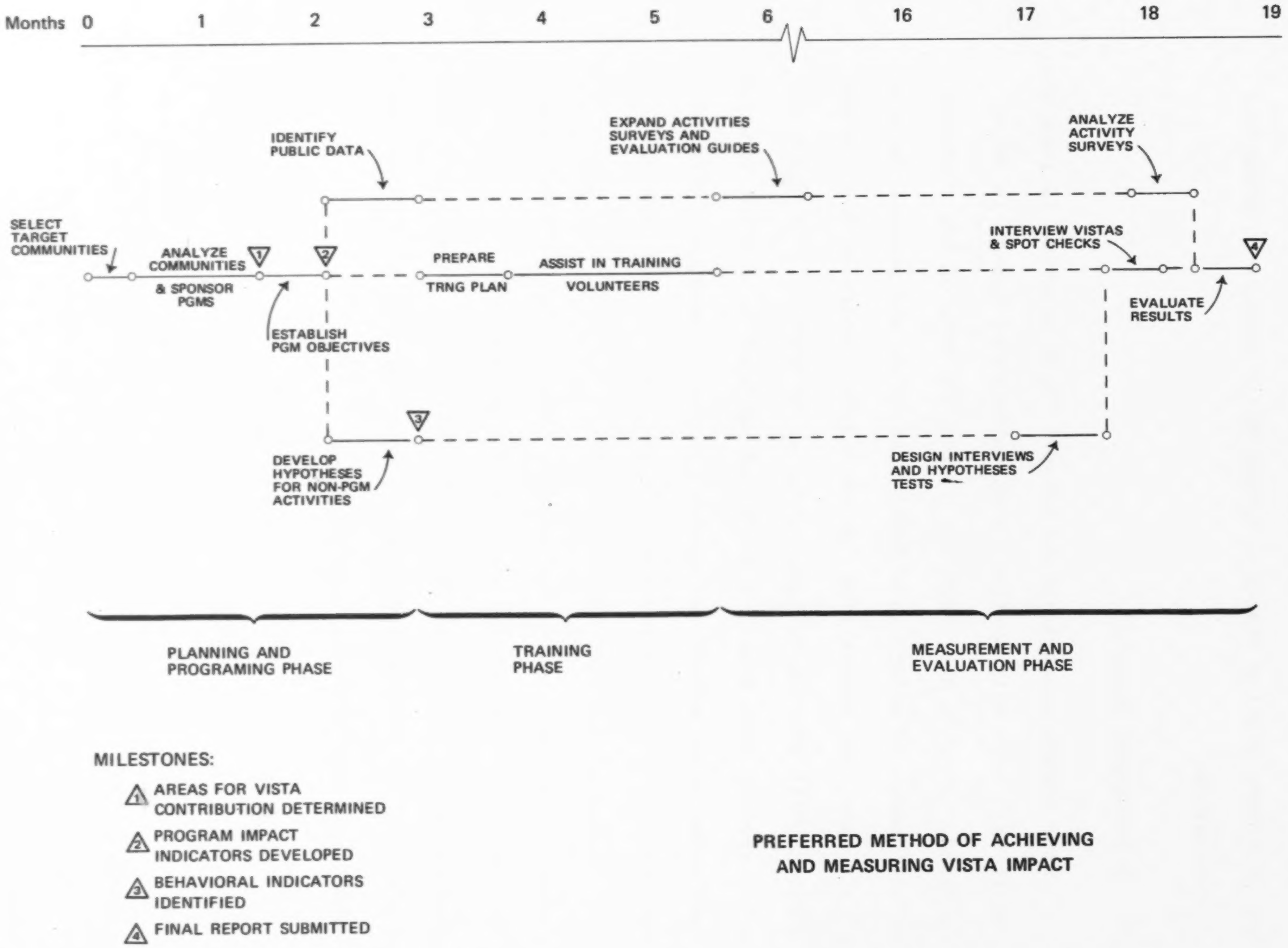
The costs associated with the preceding measurement approach are minimal. They consist of the time required to (1) identify indicators and formulate the hypotheses concerning acceptable impact, (2) interview between 5 and 20 VISTA Volunteers assigned to the same sponsor, and (3) obtain information to test the impact hypotheses for the sample in the control group population. This might amount to no more than one man-month of professional time, plus expenses, and require about $5,000 for a contractor to measure the impact of one VISTA group. This cost, of course, is primarily a function of sample size, which in turn is related to the percentages involved in the hypotheses and the acceptable risks in testing them.

It would be statistically valid to make inferences to a larger VISTA constituency, provided this larger constituency had basically the same characteristics as the population used for the test. For example, if the group used for the test consisted principally of unemployed or underemployed poor whites in the coal fields of Eastern Kentucky, the conclusions contained might also be extended to all similar communities with comparable VISTA presence. In practice, however, determining which population groups had genuinely similar characteristics would require considerable investigation.

C. A Preferred Approach

Some impact measurement of present VISTA programs is possible, but it will only tell whether or not acceptable impact is being realized. It will not yield any evaluative data on the relative effectiveness of alternative VISTA activities and program decisions. Nonetheless, the impact that can be feasibly measured for present projects will provide valuable information that is both basic and not currently available. A preferred approach to a pilot measurement model would affect the entire process of planning, programming, and evaluating VISTA activities. A schematic representation of this preferred approach is illustrated on the following page. The preferred approach builds and expands upon the use of behavioral indicators and statistical testing of hypotheses suggested for impact measurement of current programs. It consists of three basic parts: a planning and programming phase; a volunteer training phase; and a measurement and evaluation phase.

The first step in the preferred approach is to identify poverty communities for which VISTAs are to be programmed. It is recommended that two urban, two rural, and two Indian reservation communities be selected. The selection of thse communities should be made prior to the beginning of the training cycles for the VISTAs being assigned to them.


Months
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
16
17
18
19
SELECT TARGET COMMUNITIES
ANALYZE COMMUNITIES & SPONSOR PGMS
1
ESTABLISH PGM OBJECTIVES
2
IDENTIFY PUBLIC DATA
DEVELOP HYPOTHESES FOR NON-PGM ACTIVITIES
3
PREPARE TRNG PLAN
ASSIST IN TRAINING VOLUNTEERS
EXPAND ACTIVITIES SURVEYS AND EVALUATION GUIDES
DESIGN INTERVIEWS AND HYPOTHESES TESTS
INTERVIEW VISTAS & SPOT CHECKS
ANALYZE ACTIVITY SURVEYS
EVALUATE RESULTS
4
PLANNING AND PROGRAMING PHASE
TRAINING PHASE
MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION PHASE
MILESTONES:
1 AREAS FOR VISTA CONTRIBUTION DETERMINED
2 PROGRAM IMPACT INDICATORS DEVELOPED
3 BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS IDENTIFIED
4 FINAL REPORT SUBMITTED

PREFERRED METHOD OF ACHIEVING AND MEASURING VISTA IMPACT

The next step takes advantage of the community study customarily done by VISTA training institutions prior to the training and assignment of volunteers. Training contractors and training officers study the community and the project for the purpose of providing relevant training experiences to the trainees. Ostensibly, they do a detailed analysis of the community, the project, and the sponsor. In working with a number of VISTAs and over 100 community action agencies in the Mid-Atlantic Region, however, we have observed that current analyses of poverty communities and sponsor programs are too broad to serve as a basis for useful programming decisions. Hence, it would be necessary to do an especially thorough analysis of specific poverty conditions in the target communities and of how sponsor programs specifically affect these conditions. The aim of this more rigorous analysis would be to determine specific areas or efforts suitable for VISTA contribution.

With the areas for VISTA contribution clearly defined, the next step is to establish specific program objectives. These objectives should be expressed in sufficiently concrete terms to permit identification of indicators for measuring their attainment. The specification of objectives and impact measures would take maximum advantage of possibilities for using available public data for subsequent performance measurement.

Since the universe of VISTA impact will extend beyond programmed activities to more generalized areas of community organization, individual assistance, and presence, hypotheses would then have to be established regarding achievements or impacts that could reasonably be expected in these areas, given a knowledge of the target community. Since so much VISTA impact stems from presence rather than programmed activities, it is not advisable to program all of the volunteers' time. Considerations of volunteers morale also suggest that perhaps 60 percent of the volunteers' work should be regarded as programmed activity and the remainder treated as unstructured presence that is also supportive of the program goals.

To implement the measurement of specifically programmed objectives, the Activities Survey requirements for the test program communities would be expanded to reflect the impact measurements that were developed with the program objectives. The Evaluation Guide for these programs would also be modified to reflect the additions to the Activities Surveys. Thus, at the end of the program, the Activities Surveys and the findings of the evaluator, corroborated and supplemented by available public data, would be the basis for measuring the impact of programmed activities.

Impact measurement of the non-programmed activities would be done in a manner similar to that suggested for measuring the impact of current programs. An interview design would be constructed, based on the hypotheses established for anticipated impact from community organization, individual assistance, and VISTA presence.

Random samples of the target community constituencies would be selected at the end of the program. The individual volunteers associated with this sample would be interviewed and the hypotheses tested. Rather than using the surrounding community with its inherent statistical biases as a control, however, the careful analysis of the community and sponsor programs performed at the beginning of this task could be used as a base-line measure. In effect, comparison of the community before VISTA with the community after VISTA would be the control.

The possible resistance of volunteers to participation in measurement efforts is neutralized in this approach by influencing the attitudes of certain volunteers during the training cycle. Two communities, rather than one, from rural, urban, and Indian reservation tracks were selected for this purpose. The aim is to have trainees for one of the communities in each of these tracks understand (1) the analysis of the communities and of the sponsor programs for the purpose of determining areas for VISTA contribution, (2) how the specific program objectives were derived, and (3) the rationale for the program impact measures and the hypotheses associated with indicators of non-programmed impact. An effort would also be made to explain the importance to VISTA of this kind of information, for the purposes of more effectively bringing about change in poverty communities and more effectively programming VISTA Volunteers. No changes at all would be made in training the other groups. Thus, at the end of the programs, the sampling of Activities Surveys and target population constituencies could be stratified so that the differences in volunteer training, and presumably volunteer attitudes, could be more objectively evaluated. Finally, the data obtained from interviewing the volunteers would be spot checked by reviewing public data and by actually interviewing some of the sample target population about whom the volunteers were responding.

This proposed model for achieving and measuring impact can be implemented by a contractor working closely with the program officer and training institution in (1) choosing and analyzing the communities and sponsors, (2) establishing specific program objectives, and (3) identifying measures, indicators and useful public data sources. This would take approximately one month. Since six communities are involved, this phase of the approach would require approximately six man-months of professional time. The phase concerned with the training of three volunteer groups would entail three professionals working through perhaps two weeks of generic training and four weeks of on-the-job training with each group. Counting the time required for preparing training exercises, this phase would require approximately six additional man-months of professional time. The final phase, the design of interviews, sampling and interviewing respondents, and analyzing the results, would require approximately a further six man-months of professional work, to be performed in approximately three calendar months.

The exact time required for this last phase, however, will depend somewhat on the sample sizes to be used. These are a function of the risks accepted in testing the hypotheses. The six man-months, for example, would be reasonable if VISTA wanted a 90 percent confidence in testing hypotheses that a certain level of change from 70 to 90 percent of the target population indicated impact. If this confidence were to be increased to 95 percent, or if the 70 to 90 percent assumption were to be appreciably increased, the sample size would nearly double. However, since the volunteers would be used as respondents, the cost for this phase would not increase proportionately and possibly only one additional man-month would be required. On the basis of the above manpower estimate, plus spot-check interviews with the sample target population, estimates for travel and per diem expenses, about $75,000, over approximately a 19-month period, is a realistic total cost estimate at this time. Net cost should be reduced to the extent of any savings in other training costs resulting from participation of the measurement team in training the volunteers.

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